

THE TERROR IN EUROPE

537

By the Same Author

JAMES RAMSAY MACDONALD:
AN AUTHENTIC LIFE (6th Impression)

THE PACIFIC: A FORECAST
(in collaboration with Colonel
Etherton)

NOVELS

POVERTY LANE
COMMON CLAY

THE TERROR IN EUROPE

By
H. HESSELL TILTMAN

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TO
R. AND N. M.
AND ALL WHO HAVE SUFFERED
IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM

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INTRODUCTION

LIBERTY," declared Lenin, "is a *bourgeois* dream." "Let it be known, once for ever, that Fascism knows no idols, nor does it adore fetishes," shouts Mussolini, "it has walked before now over the somewhat putrefied corpse of the Goddess Liberty and, should it become necessary, will calmly do so again."

The dictators of Europe, if they agree about nothing else, are completely at one in their opinion that the will of the people must not prevail. Hence the political police, *agents provocateurs*, political courts, and weapon of deportation which have no other *raison d'être* than to silence the voice of the critic and maintain the dictatorships in power.

In Europe, over two hundred millions of people are living at this moment under conditions of tyranny or actual terror, who have either been refused, or deprived of, the fundamental essentials of personal freedom which those who believe in liberty regard as the elementary rights of the human race—freedom of conscience and of press, the right of assembly and the sacred right of personality.

In the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, Italy, Poland, Hungary and the minor nations which have imitated the example of those powers, the two great principles of freedom established in democratic countries are unknown or have been swept away. These are the sovereignty of law and the freedom of the courts from political bias of whatever direction, and the control of public affairs and policy by the whole people, acting through their elected representatives. In their place there exists the Terror—under which arrest and imprisonment without trial, exile and death, have been the fate of tens of thousands of men and women who dared to criticise the ruling clique. And the dictators, heady with power and impressed by the transient triumphs of violence, are declaring that the free democracies of Western Europe must follow their example or suffer national decline as the price of liberty. "Fascism or Communism," say Signor Mussolini's lieutenants, "will rule the world—take your choice."

Democratic government has not escaped its share of criticism during recent years. Its faults and weaknesses are glaring enough for all to see. The unfortunate necessity of converting a majority as a preliminary to governing is admittedly a slower process than intimidating opponents with the paraphernalia of political police, deportation and imprisonment without trial. But is "strong man" rule, with its attendant abuse of power, any better? The reader is left to decide after reading these chapters, which reveal what dictatorship means, not in theory, but when translated into action.

Much of the evidence that follows is of so terrible a nature that it is necessary to add that nothing has been included which cannot be substantiated. In the preparation of this volume every fact which was suspect has been discarded. Every figure has been carefully checked. While for obvious reasons the source of the information

cannot in every instance be revealed, the reader will notice that the indictment is largely based upon official communiqués and decrees and upon books and newspapers published with the approval of the Governments concerned. Other passages are supported by statements made by impartial observers or upon the author's investigations in the countries under review.

Particularly, the chapters outlining the truth concerning Russia's forced labour camps and Italy's islands of detention have been prepared from the sworn statements of men and women whose veracity can be vouched for, and after enquiries carried out under great difficulties over a period of many months.

In the twenty-four chapters which follow will be found fuller reports than have yet been available of the mass trials in Soviet Russia, and the working of class justice under Communism; of the methods of the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State in Italy; of the persecution of opponents under Fascism and in Poland and Hungary; of the activities of *agents provocateurs*; of the plight of intellectuals; of plots and counterplots.

It is, I believe, a record which no one living under freedom will read unmoved—an indictment of the modern dictators before the bar of history.

H. HESSELL TILTMAN.

TORREMOLINOS,
MALAGA.
July, 1931.

UNION OF, SOCIALIST SOVIET REPUBLICS

CHAPTER I

THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP

The disposition of mankind, whether as rulers or as fellow-citizens, to impose their own opinions and inclinations as a rule of conduct upon others, is so energetically supported by some of the best and some of the worst feelings incident to human nature that it is hardly ever kept under restraint by anything but want of power, and, as the power is not declining but growing, unless a strong barrier of moral conviction can be raised against the mischief, we must expect in the present circumstances of the world to see it increase.

JOHN STUART MILL.

THE degree of freedom—freedom of conscience, political belief, platform and press—existing in Russia to-day is aptly summarised by the familiar Moscow joke that any number of political parties may exist in the Soviet Union, subject to one condition—that one party is in power and the rest are in gaol.

The party exercising this complete and ruthless dictatorship is the Communist Party, which is, in turn, dominated by its secretary, Joseph Stalin, supreme autocrat over the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics which stretch from the Baltic Sea to the Bering Straits, and comprise one-sixth of the land mass of the world.

Within those frontiers an attempt is being made to create a new society, with new ideals, a new standard of ethics, and a new conception of man's duty to the State. There is much that is inspiring in the experiment. Great difficulties have been overcome, and a degree of selfless idealism invoked by this humanitarian drive to turn backward Russia into an industrial state which demands its tribute. For the Communist creed is humanitarian in its professed aim; it seeks to build, by common ownership, a fuller, happier life for all, rather than to elevate the few at the expense of the many.

Unfortunately for Russia, the Communist leaders, like other dictators and other reformers who have used the weapon of *force majeure*, hold the view that the end justifies the means.

There is no liberty or freedom whatever—as Western Europe understands these words—in the land of the Soviets. Did not Lenin himself declare that "freedom is a *bourgeois* dream" and warn the Russian people that it was not for them? The ruling body is the Communist Party, which controls not only the legislature, but every trade union, industrial trust, co-operative store, university, school, housing estate, bank and trading organisation in Russia.

And this dictatorship is maintained by a party which has never offered itself to the free suffrages of the people whom it rules, a party of which only one Russian in every hundred is a member. The rest of the population—the "non-active" citizens—must obey without question the dictates of the all-Russia Soviet and the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party.

Unless numbered in the ranks of the disenfranchised classes, which include the former Czarist officials, those who employ hired

labour for the purpose of extracting gain, persons living on income not derived from toil, private merchants and traders, monks and priests of religion, and those convicted of any political offence (in Moscow alone in 1930 there were living 200,000 persons, mostly intellectuals, who had been deprived of ration cards and vote for minor "offences"), the Russian adult citizen possesses a vote. But when an election comes he is given no choice of candidates or creeds. No Royalist, Conservative, Liberal, Labour man or Socialist—not even a dissident Communist—is permitted to seek the suffrages of the Russian people or challenge the theories of the present rulers. All non-Communist or dissenting parties have been declared illegal organisations. Even so powerful a Communist as Trotsky, the architect of the Red Army and once its idol, was, when he differed from Stalin, refused permission to print and circulate his policy. To-day Trotsky is living in exile, while thousands of members of the Communist Party who sided with him in challenging the accepted views of the main body of the party, have been expelled from its branches, or are in exile.

The Communist creed is sacred. Under the new standard of ethics every action is judged, not by standards of right or wrong, but solely from the standpoint of whether it is, or is not, in the interests of the ruling oligarchy. A Soviet official, to be true to his trust, must punish ruthlessly the lightest criticism of his creed. Only if this fact is kept in mind can the reader understand the paradox by which high-minded and gentle idealists, whose hearts are filled with love for humanity and hatred of poverty, have endorsed with enthusiasm decrees under which thousands of men and women, including some of the foremost Russians of this generation, have gone to their deaths without trial and without mercy, for "political offences" which in other lands would not be offences at all.

It explains how Dzerzhinsky, gentlest of Lenin's lieutenants, became the dreaded head of the Cheka and in that capacity signed the death-warrants of thousands of men and women innocent of any crime except *bourgeois* birth, while the same man more than once jeopardised his position by refusing to send to the shooting squad some unknown person whom he believed, according to Communist ethics, had been unjustly set aside for death by the secret police. As one of his acquaintances has told me: "He would resign and go into exile rather than condemn anyone he believed to be innocent, but let his own mother criticise the creed which he believed was bringing a new era to his land, and Dzerzhinsky would have shot her with his own hand."

Bolshevism has adopted all the old machinery of the Czars and added more. The G.P.U., or political police, the camp of exile, the strict censorship of the press and of the mails, the refusal to permit any but perfervid Communists to leave Russia, the denial of the elementary rights of man—freedom of conscience, speech and

assembly,—and the organisation of law and justice with a single aim in view; the defence of the Soviet State, all these weapons are part and parcel of the class state which has arisen, phoenix-like, from the ashes of Czarist Russia.

A proper understanding of such political conditions would be difficult for Western minds without consideration of the evolution of the governing mind in Russia in the past, and especially in the immediate past.

Unless it is remembered that the growth of the Russian State has been closely connected with military successes—with a policy of violence—almost up to recent times, it is difficult to view in correct perspective the militarist mentality of the present rulers and the passive acceptance by the Russian people of the strict discipline of the present régime.

Before the revolution the Russian Criminal Code, substantially unchanged since the time of Alexander II, was one of the most enlightened in Europe. Penalties for political offences were severe according to the standards of Western Europe, but the death penalty existed only in special circumstances, when revived under court-martial procedure in times of social unrest. Even for the crime of homicide it had been abolished.

This Code was swept away in 1917, and the Bolsheviki Code which replaced it introduced a new and sterner note, and one in which, unhappily, the same recognition was not shown for the sacredness of human life.

The British Labour Delegation which visited the U.S.S.R. in 1920 mentioned, in their Report, that : " the discipline of the transport service is severe ; fines, imprisonment and curtailment of privileges are inflicted for many offences, and drunkenness on the railway on the part of an official is punishable with death by shooting." And the railwaymen as trades unionists and proletarians, be it noted, were among the " chosen " of the revolution.

It must also be remembered, when we seek explanation for present conditions in Russia, that the liberation of the Russian peasant from slavery became an established fact only seventy years ago, in 1861. Until that date, the whole peasant population of Russia, numbering 90 per cent of the population, were slaves owned by those who held the big estates, and the generation which took part in the two revolutions of 1917 were the children of these serfs.

Any attempt before 1917 to introduce any radical change in this mediæval state of society was frustrated by the rigid absolutism of the rulers of Russia and their favoured advisers. Wise and far-sighted statesmen did exist, men who realised that Russia could not permanently lag behind in the march of progress without imperilling the safety of the régime, but their efforts to introduce reforms were rendered abortive by the blank wall of absolutism. Two outstanding examples of such were Witte and Stolypin, both of whom were in

the service of the late Czar Nicholas II. The first-named endeavoured to develop Russia economically, and the second, Stolypin, foresaw coming events and favoured making certain concessions to the evolution of political opinion in Russia in the form of a limited monarchy.

Both these men sought for means to save the monarchy in Russia, which they were convinced was in danger, by means of radical reforms. Nicholas hated one and betrayed both. Witte he tried to represent to the people as a clever financier who sought to benefit business interests. The Prime Minister, Stolypin's, freedom of action he so limited that that statesman could make no progress towards the reforms he believed to be necessary and became the mere head of a political department in the State machine.

An incident of the Czar's last hours as the Emperor of all the Russias is an apt commentary upon the faith of the rulers of Russia that all was well with their crumbling world. One of the last actions of the Czar Nicholas, before the revolution of March, 1917, and the proclamation of a Provisional Government under the direction of Prince Lvov, was to cause enquiries to be made concerning an epidemic of measles at the military academy at Petrograd. Only a few hours later there occurred an outbreak which Stolypin had foreseen and which might have been averted had the Czar listened to the warnings of his wise counsellor. But the Czar—as the Communists to-day—believed himself strong enough to repress political thought by violence, and the opportunity for a peaceable transference of some portion of his powers to the people of Russia passed—never to return. It may well be that Lenin looking back over the history of Russia—a history which contains but one single instance of compromise on a political question, the reforms introduced by Alexander II—preferred to place his trust in the usual Czarist methods of repression and coercion rather than in perilous radical experiments the end of which no man could foresee. The Bolsheviks did not introduce violence to Russia, they merely continued it in a form more efficient and more ruthless than anything the Czarist régime had ever attained.

Nor must it be forgotten, in this brief survey of the political evolution of Russia, that absolutism was unable to create and educate a governing class in that country. The upper class, the real backbone of Russian military success and State administration, were left without any real voice in the Government. The Czar remained the sole ruler of 150,000,000 people—rich and poor alike.

Shut out from any development towards a parliament or even a council of state, the nobility became the discontented cradle of the first and last school of revolutionary thought in Russia. Those who led the struggle for freedom in that country for a century before 1917 were not the peasants or workers but the intelligentsia.

The rise of bureaucracy followed the freeing of the nobles from obligatory military service and the freeing of the slaves. During the

last years of Czardom, education (difficult for a peasant or worker to obtain) became a passport to a Government post, and the stepping stone to a slow rise to high position in the State machine. In 1917 the leading administrators of Russia were no longer drawn from the nobility only, but from those of all classes who had managed to secure any degree of education and who were content to carry out orders without question. The Communist Dictatorship is only repeating this procedure to-day.

The development of progressive ideas coincident with the rise of capitalism and industrialism, which has been a usual feature of the history of recent years in Western countries, had no parallel in Russia. The industrialists of that country were retrogressive rather than progressive. Also Russia lacked a strong middle class, the necessity for pacifying which might have led to a "grading down" of absolutism. A very true picture of the Russian trader and industrialist as he existed during the years preceding the revolutions may be obtained from Ostrovsky's bitter comedies. The dramatist faithfully set down the atmosphere of the Moscow which he knew.

In such conditions it is natural that labour, organised within itself but devoid of power and consideration, should be as restless and discontented in its own sphere as were the political reformers in theirs. The advisers of the rulers of Russia were firmly convinced, however, upon what evidence it is difficult to judge, that the paternal benevolence of the State precluded any possibility of serious economic conflict. "In Russia, thank God, there is not, and could not be, a labour question," they said—and believed it.

As one historian has written, officialdom believed that "under a paternal régime, standing as it did over the people and acting independently of all, the labouring class had constant protection and could always look to it, the State, as an unbiased judge for a just settlement of conflicting interests. At present, in view of what has happened in Russia within recent years, it is difficult for us to believe that as late as 1903-4 this opinion was stoutly maintained by the Government and firmly believed in by many in Russia even up to the very last days of autocracy."¹

Yet the whole history of organised labour in Russia is a contradiction of this curious and comfortable view. Those who examine the subject will discover, not a contented body of workers living peacefully under the protection of a benevolent régime, but a life of hard reality in which the worker was an outcast, steeped in moral and material misery. Only neglect, long endured, could have created the class-consciousness and class-solidarity of the manual workers of Russia which has been a feature of the Bolshevik régime.

As in other lands, dissatisfaction was expressed in strikes, but in strikes of a turbulent and a political character unknown elsewhere. Czarist methods of settlement employed the police or military forces

¹ *Russia*, by N. Makeev and P. O'Hara. (Benn.)

and often ended in arrest and exile. It is not surprising to learn that the workers were absolutely at the mercy of employers and subject to "inhuman, merciless" exploitation," or to find those same workers, as members of the ruling party in Soviet Russia, acquiescing in similar methods of violence and repression in order to ensure that there shall be no return to the conditions of other days.

The reforms that were introduced are illuminating. In 1882 a law was announced to regulate the employment of minors in factories and workshops. Children under twelve were not to be engaged in such work. Eight hours a day in two shifts was the limit for children between twelve and fifteen. By a new law issued in 1884 this limit was fixed at six hours a day in one shift, but in 1890 this was amended to nine hours a day in two shifts.

Between 1881 and 1886 a wave of violent strikes spread over Russian industry and the Government became alarmed. Could it be that in Russia there was a "labour question" after all? The Minister of Home Affairs reported that: "Investigation by the local authorities of the present strikes show that they threaten to take a serious turn . . . and are the result of the lack of proper legislation for defining the mutual relations of workers and employers. . . . The necessity of having recourse to the army for stopping strikes is sufficient evidence of the urgent importance of proceeding to establish regulations which to a certain extent will limit the arbitrariness of manufacturers and help to put an end to the lamentable occurrences of this time."

A law was instituted therefore which, among other provisions, aimed at preventing the imposition of unjust fines (often at that time 40 per cent of wages), docking-off of wages, withholding payments, paying in form of goods, and other forms of exploitation.

This law of 1886 was an advance, but a small one, for its whole tendency was in favour of the employer. For example, a workman who broke its provisions was liable to imprisonment, whereas an employer who defied it was held only civilly responsible, and liable to a fine. Events proved that even this modest grain of reform was never strictly enforced, and the abuses which it was intended to correct continued.

In 1897, a further law regulated the working hours of factory operatives to 11½ a day, and to 10 hours in the case of night workers. This regulation, according to the Government, "established the limit beyond which the exploitation of the worker was useless for the employer." But true to the Russian habit in matters of labour regulation, of taking away with one hand what was conceded with the other, this law made special allowances for the employment of overtime labour, and shortly afterwards the overtime hours limit—not more than 120 hours in any year—was abolished.

Until 1906, labour in Russia possessed no right to organise unions for the defence of its economic interests. Up to that year, strikes

were regarded as criminal acts and those participating in them—whatever the cause or however great the provocation—were liable to imprisonment for sixteen months and to exile in Siberia for an indefinite period.

“Labour conditions were, indeed, thoroughly abnormal,” state the authors of a history of this period.¹ “The reports of inspectors of factories, Government officials, do not disguise the appalling misery of the mass of the factory hands at this time, the dirt and filth of their working and home surroundings, the overcrowding, &c.”

Attempts to end this wretched state of affairs were frustrated by spies. From 1896 the factory inspectors appointed by the Government, nominally to protect the interests of the workers (in the Moscow district before the revolution there were two inspectors for 2,000 factories!), were required to report to the police any criminal or revolutionary propaganda coming to their notice. In 1903, these inspectors were placed under the authority of local Governors, and from that date all pretence at any independence of action was abandoned, and they became a mere industrial appendage of the State.

In order to control the growing turbulence of the workers, who were still refused the right of assemblage or of combination in their own interests, the State organised a special force of factory police “on whom, as well as on the owners and managers of factories, was placed the responsibility of keeping a careful watch on dangerous propaganda and disturbing rumours of any kind.”

These are the conditions under which the present generation of class-conscious proletarians in the Soviet Union grew to manhood. Is it so remarkable that they lent a willing ear to the apostles of revolution who moved surreptitiously in their midst during the closing years of Czarist Russia, or that those same revolutionaries, now in control of the destinies of their country, have not that sensitiveness, where injustice is concerned, which we find in other lands where political freedom has existed for centuries?

During the nineteenth century, there grew and flourished a new class usually labelled the intelligentsia. Living under absolutism and quickened to action by that fact, these Russian intellectuals absorbed the most advanced ideas in every field of thought. The impossibility of giving practical expression to them led to the development of sectarianism of every kind—religious, political and intellectual—and to political radicalism. Thus Russian Liberalism, at first a constitutional movement for reform, was, owing to the impossibility of making any impression upon the Czars, driven into the revolutionary camp and found itself, against its own wishes, supplying the first revolutionaries.

In Britain and the Western countries, it is a commonplace for the intellectual to find an outlet for his knowledge in industry; in Russia the practical work of life was regarded by the intelligentsia

¹ *Russia*, by N. Makeev and P. O'Hara.

as beneath their dignity and few of them would take any part in industry or trade. Here again was a gulf which separated the classes of Russia before the revolution, and a further explanation for the feeling of frustration which encouraged the growth of revolutionary ideas. Without an appreciation of these facts, it is impossible to understand the figure of Lenin—the professional revolutionary, whose father was a nobleman in addition to being an inspector of schools. To the social conditions existing in Russia until 1917, with the denial of any voice in the affairs of the State, may be directly traced the elevation of revolution as an honourable profession.

How could one understand the number of Jews, Caucasians and members of other minority races in the former Russian Empire prominent in the Bolshevik machine to-day without taking into account the persecution and repression of minorities under the Czars?

Very significant in the Russia of the Czars, also, was the studied disrespect for the law. The governing machine neglected no opportunity of demonstrating that laws were proclaimed only to be broken, and both the bureaucracy and people regarded breaches of the legal code as of little consequence. This fact makes it simpler to understand the manner in which the G.P.U., under orders from the Soviet Government, continue to violate the law, passed in 1922, which declares that no person shall be shot within the Soviet Union without fair and full trial. For the slow evolution of contempt for solemn decrees of State which makes such excesses possible without any public protest, we must go back—as in most phases of Russian political life to-day—to the example set by the Czars.

A particularly flagrant example of this contempt for the law, well known to all students of Russian history, is afforded by the chequered career of the Russian Duma or assembly.

On October 3, 1905, following the suppression of the revolution of that year and while his advisers were still alarmed by the widespread discontent which that rising had revealed, the Czar signed a decree which was hailed by the world as the dawn of Russian liberty. This decree promised absolute liberty of the individual to live his own life, freedom of conscience, subject, opinion and assembly, and the calling of a representative Russian parliament which would enable the voice of the people to be expressed in the conduct of Russian affairs.

But when the Czar heard the voice of the people of Russia he grew alarmed. This was not the voice which he had expected. The first Duma was too revolutionary to be tolerated so it was dismissed, by an edict of July 7, 1906, in defiance of the decree under which it had been brought into being to express the wishes of the Russian people.

A second election brought no better result to the Government—the strongest group in this second parliament being the Socialists,

Labour and Radical members, numbering one hundred and ninety-four members, while the reactionary Right held only sixty-three seats. Clearly this state of affairs could not be tolerated without endangering the absolutism of the Czar, and after only five months of existence this second Duma was similarly, and illegally, dismissed on June 3, 1907.

Once again, the advisers of the Czar proceeded to plan changes in the franchise which would make sure that the Monarchists controlled this new body, and so prevent a recurrence of the radical debates which had taken place in the dismissed parliaments. In open violation of the constitution granted after the unsuccessful revolution of 1905 and without consulting either Duma or State Council, the Government cut down the peasant representation to less than one-half, and divided up the seats thus gained between the nobility and persons with high property qualifications. The representation of the minority races was also drastically curtailed. Further, direct election was abolished and a scheme of indirect representation introduced, by which responsible citizens—nobles, clergy, merchants, workers, &c.—each formed distinct categories, and had to elect not members of the Duma, but special electors to represent them, and these special electors in their turn met at local conventions in order to elect the deputies allotted to their district.

It seemed as though the disturbing shadow of radicalism had been once more thrust out of sight. The third Duma elected under this new and restricted franchise, met in 1907 with the Radical elements in a minority, and the supporters of the Government strongly entrenched. The price paid for this open "rigging" of even the modest powers which the Duma was supposed to possess, was the loss of all its prestige in the eyes of the people. The reformers no longer regarded it as an instrument for reform and were once more driven to contemplate violent methods. Yet events proved that there they were wrong. The demand for change and progress was too insistent to be kept down by even the undemocratic franchise illegally forced upon the third Duma, and it was a Duma elected under that same restricted franchise which in 1917 became the vehicle by which the overthrow of Czardom was finally achieved.

Under these conditions, however, to be a professional revolutionary became a fashionable occupation in life. Revolution was the end to which many of the finest sons of Russia bent their energies. The different groups might disagree, argue, split asunder and wrangle with each other. But Bolshevik or Menshevik, Socialist Revolutionary, Cadets, Liberals, Anarchists and the rest, they all and always worked for revolution.

It may well be that to these years of planning—on paper—on the part of the most progressive elements in Russian life may be traced that curious belief in the infallibility of figures which is a feature of the present régime in that country. Could the Five Year Plan, with

the almost religious reverence bestowed upon it and all its intricate figures, have been attempted or have happened in any other country? Could any other Government have convinced its people that so multitudinous a scheme was perfect in every detail?

In what other country could the idea of the compulsory regulation of all the everyday activities of the population solely for the purpose of carrying out certain theoretical plans approved by the party in power have been even within the realm of possibility? But in Russia's past we may trace other and similar examples of transforming life according to plan which reveal the genesis of the Five Year Plan in Russian history.

An instance of such large-scale planning is associated with the name of Arakcheev, chief agent and adviser of Czar Alexander I, whose military "settlements" made his name a byword in pre-war Russia. Under Arakcheev's plan villages were artificially created in which every peasant underwent military discipline and was regulated in all his movements. Some thousands of people were subjected to this early attempt to carry out an agrarian "plan" upon his estates, and it was twenty years before the attempt was finally abandoned.

Such, in brief outline, was the social order under which the present Communist leaders of Russia were born and bred, and which was overthrown by the forces of the Provisional Government and the Duma in March, 1917. From these seeds grew the tree which has given to the world the Bolshevik experiment. The criticism which the present rulers of Russia find it most difficult to answer is not that they worked for a revolution, but that having achieved the control of their country, they have preferred to perpetuate the intolerance, repression and cruelty of the Czarist régime rather than organise their country along the lines of a parliamentary democracy.

More than an echo of vanished Czardom can be detected in the following "programme for Communists," dated May, 1918, and issued by Bukharin, one of the leaders of the Communist Revolution:

"The party of the Communists not only allows no freedom (such as liberty of the press, speech, meetings, unions, &c.) for the *bourgeois* enemies of the people, but goes still further, and demands of the Government to be always ready to close the *bourgeois* press, to break up gatherings of the enemies of the people, to forbid their lying and libelling, and sowing panic; the party must mercilessly suppress all attempts of the *bourgeoisie* to return to power. And this is what is meant by a dictatorship of the proletariat;"

while in the course of a considered statement of the aims of the new Communist State, adopted by the Communist International on

September 1, 1928, the dictatorship of the proletariat is re-defined in these terms :

“ The Soviet State, being the highest form of democracy namely, proletarian democracy, is the very opposite of *bourgeois* democracy, which is *bourgeois* dictatorship in a masked form. The Soviet State is the dictatorship of the proletariat, the rule of a single class—the proletariat. Unlike *bourgeois* democracy, proletarian democracy openly admits its class character and aims avowedly at the suppression of the exploiters in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population . . . while disarming and suppressing its class enemies the proletarian state at the same time regards this deprivation of political rights and partial restriction of liberty as temporary measures in the struggle against the attempts on the part of the exploiters to defend and restore their privileges. . . .”¹

The new absolutism may be traced in the pronouncements of other leading figures of the Soviet régime. It extends to every branch of thought. Religion is naturally suspect as “ opium for the people,” and even laws are regarded solely from the class viewpoint, thus reproducing within the Communist State one more analogy with Czarism.

An appreciation of the Communist views upon justice is necessary for all who would attempt to understand the continuance of persecution in a land the rulers of which are dedicated to a new humanitarianism. As I have stated, in Russia every law and decree is regarded, not from the point of view of justice, but solely according to its repercussions upon the fortunes of the proletarian state. As Goikhbarg, a leading Soviet jurist has expressed it : “ Religion and law form part of the creed of oppressors. All conscious proletarians know now that religion is opium for the people, but I believe that not many people understand properly that law is also opium for the same people, but more potent and a stronger drug.”

Another official Soviet jurist declares that the form of the law must be in conformity with the revolutionary aim—thus the phrase “ revolutionary legality,” which justifies many things in Russia to-day—and that judicial decisions must satisfy not necessarily the law but, more important, the revolutionary mentality, which is fluid and not static, and which can be changed by circumstances. Thus Soviet legislation is based not upon one code of laws, but upon the exigencies of events.

Arkhipov, another Soviet writer, and an interpreter of Lenin, states that Soviet laws are instrumental in their character. “ Revolutionary law is just an administrative instruction,” he declares, while Lenin himself laid it down that “ our decrees are just instructions.

¹ Quoted from programme adopted by the fifth World Congress of the Communist International at Moscow, June, 1924.

Our instructions to the community are for practical purposes . . . they must not be considered as definitive laws which have to be applied without question."

These quotations from Soviet sources show that the Russian Government, unlike other Governments, does not consider itself bound to consider its own laws in relation to its ordinances or actions. Even the Czars who would permit no man to reduce their absolute power, respected the Criminal Code, and sometimes permitted their actions to be tempered by a regard for European public opinion, but Communists go further—they reserve the right to complete and absolute power irrespective of any law that may be passed by the all-Russia Soviet.

Soviet justice is, like Soviet laws, an instrument for the defence of the Workers' State. The judicial system of Soviet Russia dates from a decree issued on November 24, 1917, which established a system of "people's courts." This decree automatically abolished the old courts and "*bourgeois*" justice, and established class justice, open and avowed, throughout Russia. Under the new judicial dispensation all but the "toiling masses" have been deprived of any right of protection. The courts are composed exclusively of workers and the poorer peasantry, and their decisions are final.

An interesting pronouncement regarding the principles on which is based the Soviet conception of justice, was made by Krylenko, Deputy Commissar for Justice and the first Assistant Public Prosecutor of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (R.S.F.S.R.) in his book, *Court Structure of the R.S.F.S.R.*, published in 1924.

"For us, the Workers' and Peasants' State," he declared, "no form of court is acceptable except one which always and under all conditions will guarantee the defence of the interests of the workers."

Krylenko further outlines the formulæ of the Soviet Government for the courts as follows :

1. All State authority is nothing but a weapon of social force and constraint, with the aid of which a given governing class in a given society realises its political sovereignty and guards its economic sovereignty.
2. Every court in every society always has been, is and will continue to be, nothing more than one of the means of effecting such constraint and force, so long as class society continues to exist.
3. Every court, on a basis of the preceding theses, has the task of defending the interests of a given governing class and is distinguished from other means of defence only by its specific form and nothing more.

4. Consequently, the formulator of court practice, in deciding the question of the structure of a judicial system, must consider it from this point of view: "I must construct that kind of judicial system which will most nearly fulfil the task of defending the interests of a given governing class in a given society, effecting this defence by all measures of constraint and force provided for and formulated in law; and the merit of this judicial system will be the greater, the more correctly it is regulated and constructed so as to give the minimum of errors in court decisions."

The reader will find some of the court sentences and activities of the G.P.U., recorded in later chapters, more understandable if this frank interpretation of the ethics of class justice is kept in mind. In Soviet Russia, neither law nor justice is divorced from party politics; both are the handmaidens of Communism.

Gourvich, official interpreter of Soviet law, writing on the Soviet constitution, declared that: "The power of the State rests upon violence before everything . . . States are a relationship between the power of the Government on the one side and those subordinated on the other. In other words, it is a relationship between domination and slavery."

In view of these official interpretations of the Soviet conception of the power of the Communist dictatorship, it is perhaps not surprising that, from the very birth of the Soviet State, from the first declaration of the rights of the exploited class which was published on January 16, 1918, and which constitutes the first part of the Soviet Constitution (drafted by Lenin himself), to this day, Soviet legislation contains no statement regarding liberty. Moreover, even in principle the fundamental rights of man as an individual are not mentioned.

The declaration of 1918 mentioned above, proudly called a "Declaration of the rights of the working and oppressed peoples," is no more than a declaration of the rights of the State and Government.

The right of assembly is regarded as inviolable in Western countries, and we might, therefore, expect to find a precise statement on such an important aspect of liberty in this "key" law of the Soviet State. What do we find? The only clause dealing with it reads: "The Government will place at the disposal of the working-class and poor peasants all necessary buildings which may be needed for the purpose of public meetings, together with furniture, light and heating." There is no word as to who may "need" such accommodation without causing inconvenient police enquiries, or what subjects may be discussed, or whether there exists the right of holding meetings *in camera*.

All who have even a slight acquaintance with conditions in Russia

to-day know the natural sequel—none but Communists may meet at all.

Article 14 of the same law reads: "To assure to the workers real liberty for expressing their opinion the State will place at their disposal all the technical facilities for publishing newspapers, magazines, books and all other messages." There is no word as to who is to enjoy these facilities, and for what purposes. With what result? One of the first actions of the Soviet Government was the suppression of all freedom of the press. Immediately after the October revolution which placed Lenin in power, all non-Bolshevik publications were ordered to be suppressed. The "freedom of the press," which had long been one of the aims of the revolutionists, was jettisoned overnight. At a later date, and up to 1922, a few non-Communist sheets did appear sporadically, but one by one they disappeared.

Article 16 bluntly declares, "Those who do not work shall not eat."

During following years all the articles of this "Declaration of Rights" were superseded except the following which was included in the new Bolshevik Constitution and Code of Laws issued in 1922, and last amended in 1925. It is the only one which contains any kind of definition of individual rights, and is Article 23, which says: "Guided by the interests of the working-class as a whole, the Soviet Socialist Federal Republic of Russia deprives certain individuals and certain groups of all rights formerly held by them. This is done in the interests of the Socialist revolution."

In examining the question of the liberty of the subject in Russia, it must be stressed that the machinery of government, administration and justice are all interlocked and subject to one and the same control. There is no separation of legislature and judiciary, such as safeguards the subject against the administration of the law for political ends in progressive countries. In Russia the Præsidium of Ministers has the power not only to issue laws without reference to the all-Russia Soviet, but to change the constitution without reference to any elected assembly.

Secondly, it is almost impossible to draw any distinction between law, decree and administrative instruction.

Thirdly, there is no strict definition of the powers held by the various governing bodies. For this reason a decree issued by Moscow may be amended and changed in a Federal State or in the provinces before it is carried out. There is thus within the Soviet Union no single pattern of justice or administration. If this power were wisely used to fit new laws to local conditions there might be much to be said for such elasticity, but in practice the abuses of the system are more obvious than its benefits.

Fourthly, although all "instructions" issued by the Government have the same force as a law, not all such decrees are published. Occasionally a Soviet official will reveal that he is acting under a law,

the existence of which the public never suspected. The official may comment upon it to explain his order, but he will not reveal its terms.

Bearing these peculiarities in mind, let us examine the question of equality within the Soviet State.

The principle of equality is quite alien to Soviet mentality. The population of Russia is divided into two categories—working and not working. The second category is deprived of all political rights (such as exist in Russia), and in respect of personal rights this group is left without any defence. By general practice this second category is defined not only as non-workers, but as non-workers by origin or *bourgeois* birth.

The effects of the ruling are serious. Young men of "non-working" origin, for example, are not eligible for admission to higher schools or universities. So great are the difficulties of securing educational facilities which face the children of the former *bourgeois* class, or those suspected of "*bourgeois* tendencies," that it is a commonplace, frequently reported in the Soviet press, for young men and girls to renounce their parents, leave home and change their names, in order to become eligible for rights reserved for proletarians. The degree of suffering directly arising out of this harsh distinction is incalculable.

Another example of this same inequality is afforded by an examination of Soviet law, under which the penalties for certain crimes are milder for persons of proletarian origin than for those who cannot claim this distinction.

In the present state of Soviet law there is no clear line of demarcation between proletarian and non-proletarian origin, an omission which leaves a loophole for a wide and sometimes arbitrary interpretation of the decrees. No one can tell you whether the nephew of a person of *bourgeois* extraction will or will not be judged of non-proletarian origin until the youth in question applies for some facility reserved for proletarians. This obviously opens the door to abuse.

Even among the workers or proletarians complete equality has not been attained. Workers who are members of the Communist Party enjoy many privileges at law. For example, by a decree dated July 6, 1922, the only publications exempt from any censorship are the publications of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The only meeting which is allowed to take place without permits from the authorities is, according to the special instruction of August, 1922, the Communist Congress.

Until the introduction of the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) in 1922, it was not possible to speak of any rights whatever, for this was the period of civil war, chaos and the Red Terror. The famous decree of September 6, 1918, declared that every individual belonging "to the White Guards' organisations or taking part in any plot against the Soviet Government," was to be shot, without any trial or appeal.

The months that followed the publication of this document were made infamous by the activities of the dreaded Cheka.

By a decision of the Ninth All-Russian Congress of Soviets the Cheka, whose ruthless activities had become a byword even in Russia, was abolished and superseded by the Unified State Political Department, popularly known as the G.P.U.—the political police organisation which remains the principal weapon of the Communist Party for the defence of the Soviet State.

Commenting upon this change, an American commentator on Soviet law remarks: "A decision of the congress that deserves special mention concerns the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission or Cheka. This police system, a government within a system of authority, had so systematically spread terror throughout Russia, that even the inner circle of rulers sought to limit its powers. The Ninth Congress, while lauding the work accomplished by the Cheka in the period of the civil war, nevertheless decided that its activities should be restricted and that, in certain cases, its jurisdiction should be taken over by ordinary judicial organs. Because of the odium and fear attaching even among Communists to the work of the Cheka, it was decided that the organisation should be called thereafter the State Political Administration (G.P.U.). Its duty would be to protect the security of the State.

"The change from the Cheka to the G.P.U. was little more than in name. The practices remained about the same. The observations of Martov at the Seventh Congress of Soviets in December, 1919, were still valid. In a resolution censuring the Government, he then declared that because of a bureaucratic degeneration of authority a State was being formed within a State. An 'omnipotent authority or the organs of repression and police administration' had resulted from the civil war."¹

The Resolution introduced by Martov, who, be it noted, sat as a Menshevik member of the Social Democratic Party in the All-Russia Soviet until all non-Communist elements were expelled shortly after this date, continued: "After several attempts to reduce this apparatus to its normal activity, rendering it subordinate to the revolutionary courts and the Soviets, the Government was forced completely to surrender before the Cheka, placing at its will the life, liberty and honour of the citizens. The monstrous growth of the terror, the elimination of everything which resembled courts, and the uncontrolled rule of anarchy are the results of this policy."

In a further statement, this same Socialist leader stated: "Simultaneously with this dying out of the fundamental institutions on which the Soviet Constitution was founded, was occurring the forcible expulsion therefrom of all spirit of freedom. The forcible removal from the Soviets of one non-Communist Party after another and the complete suppression of freedom of elections actually deprive

¹ *Soviet Rule in Russia*, by Walter Russell Batsell. (Macmillan, New York.)

the greater part of the workers and peasants of the possibility of being represented by the persons or groups whom they trust. The Soviets and their Congresses gradually become the filial branches of a single organisation of the Communist Party. Actually, the bearers of authority, which, in conformity with the constitution, should belong to the entire proletariat and working peasantry, are only a very small part of the proletariat."

Whether Martov's protest was justified or not, its only result was the elimination of Martov. No change was made in Soviet policy, or in Soviet police methods.

To-day the G.P.U., successor of the Cheka, is the supreme political police organisation of the Soviet State. It is divided into various sections—military, political, economic, civil, international, etc.—and has separate military detachments at its disposal in all parts of the Soviet Union.

In Article 5 of the Criminal Code, already mentioned, which was introduced in 1922 and later revised, it is laid down that no citizen may be deprived of liberty or arrested except for breach of the declared law, but this declaration is not applicable to the G.P.U., for that body, according to Article 7 of a decree published in 1922, possesses the right to arrest and imprison for two months any person it may desire. By this same decree, the G.P.U. is empowered to demand authorisation of the Præsidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet State to prolong this imprisonment. It is further laid down by the Code that a person arrested by the G.P.U. has to be brought before a Soviet Court or exiled by administrative measure.

Exile by administrative measure was established by the decrees dated August 10 and October 16, 1922, later extended by an instruction of January 3, 1923. A special commission exists under the Commissariat of Home Affairs, whose duty it is to make decisions with regard to the use of this weapon, which has been so extensively used to suppress criticism in Soviet Russia during recent years.

Under these decrees, any person may be sent into exile by administrative measure for a period not exceeding three years. The places of exile to which political offenders shall be sent are selected by the Præsidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Government. They are mostly situated in districts far removed from the cities of Russia—Siberia, Turkistan, etc. All persons sentenced to exile are deprived of electoral rights and live under the surveillance of the G.P.U.

A further power possessed by this police organisation is to sentence to exile abroad all persons whom they consider dangerous from the political point of view. It must also be remembered that there is no obligation upon the G.P.U. to publish details of sentences, arrests or executions. Executions are announced—the details of thirty-five men shot during one month were recently published in the Soviet press—but usually in order to serve as a warning to others.

The selective nature of execution announcements is admitted by the form which the G.P.U. usually favours, beginning with the words: "The G.P.U. has decided to publish . . ." These announcements are often delayed for days or weeks after the date of execution; on both the question of publication and the date selected the G.P.U. possesses absolute discretion.

In a revised version of the Constitution, issued in 1929, Article 32 makes provision for a representative of the G.P.U. to be included in the Council of Commissars of the People (the Soviet "Cabinet"), holding powers equal to those of other members. In view of the right of Commissars to issue administrative instructions, this means that the representative of the G.P.U., by virtue of his office as a Minister of State, can, without reference to the all-Russia Soviet, issue administrative orders relating to exile, imprisonment or executions, and if he thinks fit, without publication.

By a decree dated October 16, 1922, the Præsidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Government created a form of punishment by administrative measure consisting of exile to special concentration camps where forced labour must be carried out. This sentence may be given for a period not exceeding three years. It is laid down that this measure is to be applied to all members of anti-Soviet political parties, and a person so sentenced is given two weeks to settle his affairs.

In view of this extension of the powers of the G.P.U., an extension concerning the results of which there has been such bitter controversy outside Russia, it is interesting to note a remark made by Elistratov, a Soviet jurist, writing in *Administrative Law of the U.S.S.R.* (Leningrad, 1925.)

Elistratov mentions a decree dated March 28, 1924, by which the power of the G.P.U. to exile those guilty of economic counter-revolutionary activities is enlarged, and he adds that the decree which sets out the specific actions which are considered criminal and which defines the severity of the punishment for those acts, had not been made public.

Thus, according to this Soviet official, the G.P.U. has the right to condemn a man to exile with forced labour in a northern concentration camp for a crime not foreseen by any published law, and which the victim may commit without knowing he is doing anything contrary to the law of the land.

Further, according to the Criminal Code, the G.P.U. is deprived of the right to shoot without trial, but according to Article 1 of a decree of 1922, it retains the right to shoot armed bandits or "counter-revolutionaries," arrested "on the scene of their crime." Under this section of the law, the G.P.U. recently shot without trial, for "sabotage," eight officials engaged in the distribution of fruit and vegetables at Moscow, and also many hoarders of silver coins, a "counter-revolutionary" act.

In addition to the measure mentioned above, there exists a special law which empowers the Government by administrative action to limit the liberty of the subject. According to a decree of March 8, 1923, martial law may be proclaimed not only by the Central Government, but by the Executive Committee and Præsidium of the Central Executive Committees of local Soviets where these bodies cannot for any reason confer with Moscow before taking action, and where events do not permit delay. This law, again, is an exact replica of the Czarist laws of 1881 and 1892.

During the Red Terror of 1918, liberty of the press was abolished and it has not been restored. All newspapers, magazines and periodicals of non-Communist tendency were suppressed, and all machinery, buildings and stocks of paper were confiscated.

On December 12, 1921, on the eve of the introduction of the New Economic Policy, certain modified facilities were granted to a few private publishing firms, on the understanding that special authorisation for the publication of journals or books would be obtained from the *Gosizdat* (State Publishing Department) before issue.

No sooner had this degree of freedom been restored to the press than the Government found it necessary to reimpose stricter surveillance. By a decree dated June 6, 1922, a censorship committee was created, with local censorship committees in every town. The G.P.U. was represented on both the main and local committees. This committee was empowered to exercise a censorship prior to publication upon all printed matter issued within the U.S.S.R. Its certificate of permission must be obtained before the publication or circulation of any book or journal; it issues lists of prohibited publications, and exercises a censorship over all libraries. It was also given the right to suspend any publication, to limit the circulation of any publication, and to suppress any firm publishing books or journals without permission.

Under the same decree, those responsible for issuing unauthorised material, may be brought before a Soviet Court, or arrested by the G.P.U. and dealt with summarily without trial. No private publication has the right to accept any advertisement for which money is paid.

At the date of this decree, there still remained four or five private publishing firms to whom its provisions might be applied. All have long since closed their doors, so that to-day the decree remains, for all practical purposes, only as a reminder of the days before all books and newspapers were issued by the ruling party, through State organisations.

The only exception to this general rule is the *Moscow News*, a pseudo-private news-sheet issued for foreigners. The only institutions that are exempt from the censorship are the publications departments of the Communist Party and the Academy of Science at

Moscow. The concession to the Academy is more a gesture than a reality, for all its professors and officials must be supporters of the existing régime. And the only place in Moscow where a Russian may read *The Times* and other foreign newspapers is the library of the Third International, admission to which is limited by ticket to loyal proletarians having legitimate party reasons for wishing to secure access to the news of the outside world.

Needless to say, all theatrical productions, films, concerts and other forms of entertainment are similarly subject to censorship.

Only one further aspect of individual liberty remains to be examined,—the right of assembly.

As has been mentioned, by a decree of October 16, 1922, any person who is a member of any political organisation or group, other than the Communist Party, is liable to be exiled by administrative measure. Many thousands of Russian citizens have in fact been banished for real or imaginary breaches of this law. This ban upon any freedom of political opinion makes quite impossible the organisation or carrying on of any concerted opposition to the Government except by clandestine methods.

All professional organisations and trade unions are offshoots of the governing machine. Before 1922, when the Labour Code was published, it was compulsory for every worker to belong to a trade union. Since that date, this compulsion has been abolished. But in fact, as workmen are prohibited to form any independent organisation to protect their conditions, there remains for them no alternative, and no possibility of any alternative, to the official "Red" trade unions. By reason of that fact, any man who refuses to join the union of his trade is, *ipso facto*, deprived of many rights concerned with food, accommodation, electoral privileges, etc.

The legal position governing the right of assembly is not clear, no detailed legislation on the point having been issued. In practice none but Communist meetings are permitted, either in buildings or in the open. No religious service may be held outside registered churches or accommodation set apart for this purpose.

Authority to hold a public meeting, which must be obtained in every case, may be received only upon application to the Commissar for Home Affairs, and such permission may be granted only to a registered (*i.e.* Communist) organisation.

In order to legalise its position, every association or group must be registered at that department, a privilege which carries with it the necessity, in all cases, for the election of officials to be under the direct supervision of the Government.

Thus no non-Communist organisation, political, intellectual or professional, can exist within the Soviet Union. When Russia speaks, it must speak only the language of Communism; when Russians listens or reads, it must imbibe only the creed of Lenin. The intellectual blockade is complete.

Such, in brief, is the legal basis upon which the power of Communist dictatorship is maintained. How has that power been applied in everyday life in Russia during the thirteen years which have passed since Lenin issued his "Declaration of the rights of the working and oppressed peoples?"

Let us turn from theories to facts,—from an exposition of all-embracing laws and powers to their reaction upon the people of the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST RED TERROR—AND THE SECOND

"Only a person with no idea of what a revolution is would be astonished or indignant that the Soviets are dealing severely with profiteers, prevaricators, spies or traitors. But that after the régime has existed for twelve years in complete peace, without the excuse of the bloody counter-attacks in a civil war, shootings and massacres should be taken up, or more exactly taken up *again*, that the Moloch of the dictatorship should need his daily ration of victims, that irresponsible administrative bodies like the G.P.U. or so-called courts which sit without any of the elementary guarantees of the right of defence, should send to their death hundreds of unfortunate people who in other countries would not be persecuted or would, at most, be liable to imprisonment: these are the things which democratic Socialism could not tolerate without exposing itself to the just reproach of complaisance or even of moral complicity."

EMILE VANDERVELDE, Belgian Socialist Leader.

DURING that dark chapter of Russian history which is known, even in official Soviet publications, as "The Red Terror"—1918-20—the number of persons shot down without trial is beyond computation.

One thing is certain. The casualty list of the Russian Revolution, if it could be published, would shock the conscience of the world.

In those first days of primitive fear and panic any enthusiastic Communist could shoot anyone he suspected of counter-revolutionary sympathies without question, and human nature being what it is, undoubtedly many innocent persons suffered and many private feuds were settled in blood.

The word "innocent" needs a word of explanation when used in this connection. In Russia it was, and is, a social "sin" to have been an employer of labour, to have lived on interest or dividends, or to belong to the leisured classes.

But the victims of that Terror did not all fall into these categories. The names of many manual workers have their place in the casualty lists of those red days. Tuliakoff, working man member of the fourth Duma for the Don region, was executed by the Cheka in 1918. Samushkin, another worker, was shot at Vitebsk in the same year for distributing leaflets among factory workers. Sokoloff, chairman of the Ribinsk Workman's Sick Benefit Fund and a Social-Democrat (Menshevik), was executed for leading a one-day strike called to demand freedom of trade union organisation and cessation of the terror.

Many of those who had come from the Czarist prisons in the spring of 1917 to assist in the creation of a free Russia paid the price, two years later, of daring to question the decisions of their new masters.

Although it should be remembered that it was the Bolsheviks who first raised the banner of revolt, not against the Czars but against the Constituent Assembly and the forces of Parliamentary government which controlled Russia following the March Revolution of 1917; although the Bolsheviks forcibly overthrew the Assembly and the

elected representatives of the Russian people ; although they instituted the civil war and the " Red Terror " in order to seize by force what could not be gained by more constitutional means—yet those were days of such emergency, and one may admit that the zeal of the Communists was so great, that the Soviet Government may to-day declare with some truth, according to Communist ethics, that any method, however ruthless, must be condoned if the Workers' State on which their ideals were centred, was to be born, and was to survive. Founded on violence and the denial of liberty, it was yet their conception of justice and they felt impelled to fight, to slay, to torture, in order to preserve the second revolution.

As M. Vandervelde has written so truly, no one who understands a revolution, and especially a Russian revolution, will express surprise that these excesses should have occurred during the period of the civil war, or censure the Soviet Government too harshly on that account. The Bolsheviks were faced with a desperate situation : how near to defeat they were is only now becoming known. They had lost more than half Russia, and were ringed with enemies. The blockade had cut them off from the outside world, which was, in any case, hostile, and anxiously desirous of their overthrow. Within the small circle of Russia in Europe which they still controlled, absolute chaos reigned. Transport was disorganised, food was scarce, production had ceased, epidemics were raging, and fear reigned triumphant—the stark, primitive fear which is even to-day responsible for more than half the acts of terrorism which occur in that land.

An English journalist who was in Leningrad, and in close touch with Lenin, during that darkest hour before the dawn of Communism triumphant has told me how, upon one occasion, he called on Lenin to find the revolutionary leader gazing at a map on which red flags marked the position of the retreating Red Armies.

Pointing to a spot which showed the only remaining coalfield then in Soviet hands, Lenin said : " If we have to retreat further and lose that, then the revolution is over."

The same day, addressing an audience of Communists, Lenin, who never believed in concealing the seriousness of the position from his people, declared : " Prepare to make your peace with the exploiters and the *bourgeoisie*. For if ill-luck attends our armies this week, then there will be no Russian revolution a week to-day."

Ill-luck did not befall, however. The Red Armies counter-attacked and drove back the enemy, and the forces of change won at the eleventh hour.

In times such as these, it would be harsh indeed to expect those facing such terrible and pressing problems to pay too much attention to the niceties of law and justice. The only thing that mattered was the Workers' State, and they were prepared to shed all the blood that was needed to save it.

A friend of mine, on a journey from Moscow to South Russia in

creating a food crisis and endeavouring to produce starvation conditions among the masses," reported in *The Times* of September 25, 1930. Regarding this piece of terrorism, the Riga correspondent of that paper stated :

"The OGPU (G.P.U.) publishes the names of fifty-four leaders of the so-called 'starvation plot,' the alleged discovery of which was announced on Monday. The Soviet newspapers say that this is merely the first batch, as nearly all the specialists employed in the meat organisations had taken an active part in the plot, and in bold headlines the newspapers declare 'The sword of proletarian vengeance must fall without mercy on their heads.'

"Several pages of the newspapers are occupied by the alleged testimony of the chief prisoners. According to these reports, each prisoner began by declaring himself a noxious wrecker belonging to a great organisation of wreckers, which was systematically endeavouring to produce hunger conditions among the masses, and gave a list of friends who had collaborated in the 'plot.' Each confessed himself the vilest enemy of Communism and none added a word in defence of himself or his friends, but vied with the others in self-accusation.

"Exactly how the OGPU obtained this testimony is unknown, but there is a strong suspicion that it was manufactured for the purpose of exonerating the Soviet Government from blame for the prevailing starvation conditions."¹

Certainly when I visited Moscow two months before the discovery of this "starvation plot" the food shortage was acute and the population were stoically enduring inconvenience, if not privation.

I fed in the communal restaurants, both in that city and at Leningrad, and saw no vegetables, fruit or fats outside the hotels reserved for foreigners (a condition of affairs which held good over most of European Russia, excluding the Ukraine, at that date as far as I could judge). But whether this state of affairs was due to "counter-revolutionary sabotage" or to the more simple explanation of excessive exports of food, and especially fats, in order to provide the necessary foreign credits for the Five Year Plan is a moot point.

For instance, the Soviet ship on which I had travelled from London to Leningrad had just discharged a cargo of butter at the London docks, while at Leningrad there was an almost total absence of fats, even for the children. It must also be admitted, however, that many do desire the overthrow of the existing régime, both inside the Soviet Union and without.

¹ Commenting upon these arrests the Leningrad *Pravda* declared: "It is now clear that the food difficulties are the result of the wrecking activity of specialists . . . spies and wreckers headed by Fothergill (Mr. Fothergill is a director of the British Cold Storage Company in Riga) who worked at the task of starving the masses of the U.S.S.R." *Times*, Sept. 25, 1930. Both Mr. Fothergill and the British company named characterised these charges as ludicrous.



STALIN—RUSSIA'S "MAN OF STEEL"

An impression of the Communist dictator issued by the State Publishing Department of the U.S.S.R.

As a rule, the G.P.U. announces only a few of the arrests which occur, and these the most serious. Thus in 1930 it was found that the textile industry was not keeping pace with the Five Year Plan, and three of its leading technicians in the Moscow district were arrested and shot without trial. That act of terrorism has never been reported in any Soviet newspaper, or in any form.

Under such conditions it will readily be understood that little sincerity or honesty of opinion can be found in the vast State machine. Russians in Russia have learnt from bitter experience that it pays to "keep in" with those at the top.

During the long-drawn-out fight between Trotsky and Stalin for the succession to the seat of Lenin, those whose business brought them into frequent contact with the press authorities at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in Moscow could tell which of the rival leaders was winning for the moment by the desperate efforts of the minor officials to colour the news handed out, first in favour of this leader, then of the other.

Their main anxiety, not unnatural in the circumstances, was not to issue accurate reports to foreign countries, but to ensure that they were not found on the wrong side of the fence when the duel was over. A mistake might deprive them at one stroke of their job, their position in the Communist Party, their food cards and their political rights—if nothing worse.

It may be asked why those accused of political crimes against the Soviet State should, in so many cases, issue statements which vie with each other in self-condemnation. Such statements are almost a commonplace of political trials in the U.S.S.R., as we shall see, and it is difficult to produce evidence for any theories concerning them that may be advanced. But though it is impossible to discover what transpires during "interviews" between G.P.U. officials and those charged, it is reasonable, when we remember that there is no obligation whatever upon the police to bring prisoners to public trial, to suppose that the propaganda value of such "confessions" is not overlooked. In some instances, there is something more than a suspicion that prisoners who prove "amenable" to the programme as evolved by the judicial authorities receive a *quid pro quo* in the shape of escape from the shooting squad. Few will blame a man who, in the power of the G.P.U., prefers to purchase his life by cringing rather than to lose it, without trial or publicity, by defiance or keeping strictly to the truth.

If the Terror has grown less red since 1920, and it is now possible to travel across Russia without witnessing anything to offend the senses of the most mild tourist, it has nevertheless become more coldly ruthless and calculating. Blood is still spilt—but away from the public gaze.

In a report made to the French Socialist Party in 1930, M. Kerensky, former Prime Minister of the Russian Provisional Government, gave

facts concerning the intensification of the Second Terror which caused M. Vandervelde, an impartial Socialist leader, to declare that "things are happening in Russia at the present time which must horrify anyone who respects human life or liberty."

"At the present time," declared Kerensky, "the Soviet Government is shooting at least six persons daily, often after a semblance of a trial and most often without any trial at all."

"For example, the number condemned to death from October 1, to November 15, 1929, was two hundred and twenty-five. This number was increased by forty-five executions from November 15 to December 1. Apart from two or three cases these figures are taken entirely from the Soviet press. But you understand that these figures are far from representing all the executions that have taken place. For this to be done it would be necessary for all the judgments of the courts and the decrees of the G.P.U. to be published in the official papers of the U.S.S.R."

"But on the contrary, these particular cases, called 'examples,' are only communicated to the press on exceptional occasions, when the Stalin administration wishes to terrorise the population again."

At about the same date (December 15, 1929) the *Socialistichesky Viestnik*, official organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Party (now in exile), stated :

"Dozens of 'specialists' are executed and hundreds of others are deported to the Solovetsky Islands. The crowd of intellectuals in the service of the Soviets is seized with panic. They are becoming more and more persuaded that the Soviet Government is proposing to exterminate all the old 'specialists' of whatever importance, and to condemn the others to a lingering death in the prisons and places of deportation."

"The Communist press will not fail to say that the U.S.S.R., which is surrounded by enemies, is obliged to defend itself," comments M. Vandervelde upon these reports, "that the people who are being shot are conspirators, traitors to the revolution, spies or embezzlers, conscious or innocent hirelings of international capitalism. On this point we will leave the opposition Communists the trouble of replying to them. For the rest, there hardly appears to be any doubt of Kerensky being in the right when he affirms that the terror does not distinguish between the counter-revolutionaries, or those who are so-called, and the severely oppressed peasant who is revolting, the worker who is complaining of his conditions of labour, the intellectual who is deprived of his rights as a man and a citizen, the priest and the monk who have been delivered over to the secular arm as enemies of the public by an inquisition from the other side. But for the very honour of Socialism it is necessary that our protest

against terrorism, against the death penalty, against the stifling by sword and fire of all free thought and action, should also make no distinction between one side and the other."

This comparison between the forms of the First and the Second Terror may be extended to the prisons of Russia.

In 1920 prison conditions were primitive; cells were dirty and insanitary; overcrowding was terrible. Nobody had time to consider the health and comforts of the tens of thousands of prisoners who had been swept up by the broom of revolution. Sometimes the prison itself consisted of cellars in the premises where the branches of the Cheka established their headquarters. There was almost no food and the attitude of the officials was rude and often brutal. Yet certain liberties, perhaps due to the general chaos and lack of organisation, still existed within the prison-houses of the new State.

We read in books of memoirs of cases in which groups of political prisoners succeeded in securing for their use books and papers for study; it is impossible to imagine such demands being conceded to-day. Lectures were arranged within prisons for the benefit of the "politicals" who sought mental recreation. Prisoners often claimed the right to be housed together in communal cells, and indeed, many of the inmates were probably safer inside the prison cell than they would at that time have been outside.

Thus, one "intellectual" who was arrested for political reasons at that time has placed his experiences upon record, in a short memoir.¹ In this he states: "Despite the prohibition against the presence of any books in a Cheka prison, I found a German book in the cell where I was confined. And I was able to make a request that books and newspapers might be supplied to me without suffering for it. On the day following my arrest I demanded to be brought before the Cheka authorities. It may seem strange, but a few hours later I was brought before my accusers. I asked the nature of the charge which had been brought against me. Two days later I was liberated."

Similarly, in those days no arrangements were made for the prisoners to take exercise. But upon demand from Socialist prisoners, this demand was granted, at least in certain prisons.

Such leniency need not be taken as typical. Many thousands of prisoners remained in their cells for months without trial and without hope of release. From time to time batches were taken out and shot. But better conditions did exist here and there—the prison system for political offenders was not systematised on one plane of severity as it is in Russia to-day.

Such concessions would be impossible in any prison within the Soviet Union in 1931. Although the treatment of those sentenced for criminal offences is both merciful and enlightened (the Communists holding that criminals, along with the whole population, were the victims of the Czarist environment now swept away, and

¹ Gr. Aronson in *A Socialist in Prison*.

therefore more to be pitied than punished) the discipline in the prisons where those accused of political offences against the State are confined is harsh and cruel.

Conditions in the G.P.U. (political) prisons of Moscow to-day are outlined in the following notes given to the author by one who was confined in a large prison recently :

"The basement is divided into big rooms. The floor is everywhere of cement ; the walls covered with green mould and moisture. In one room there is a small window placed very high and barred ; there is very little light from it. In another room there is only a top window in the roof. The walls everywhere are covered with inscriptions, among which I noticed one reading : ' Who are not here—will be ; and those who were, will not forget. You who are to come—do not be sad. You who are going out, do not rejoice.'

"This basement is over-populated. I was the eighty-fourth prisoner. And while I was there the number never diminished. Every night two or three men were ' called up ' with all their possessions (in most cases to be shot) but more took their places.

"All the prisoners told me that during the summer there had been more than two hundred in those cells. It was impossible to lie down to sleep. They had to sleep in a sitting position. There was no bed linen, no mattresses. The cement floor was the only bed, while the atmosphere of the cells was impossible. The use of the lavatory was permitted only once in the morning. It was situated in a courtyard ; a machine-gun was placed there and prisoners using it were kept under observation all the time.

"For all other needs during both daytime and night there stood in the basement a big barrow, for which there was no cover. When we complained about this to the commandant, he said that there was a window in the cell sufficient for ventilation. To make the atmosphere a little easier, we had to make a special arrangement whereby during the night hours each prisoner in turn fanned with his clothes so that the smells were driven out of the window.

"Every day we were given boiling water, three hundred grammes of bread and some inferior soup. When I was there, all the prisoners considered their position comparatively fortunate—everyone had a place to himself on the floor ! And there was a small passage in the basement—three feet broad—after all prisoners had stretched out.

"I was surprised by the appearance of the prisoners. Their eyes were all red-rimmed ; their faces pale, and they bore other traces of their physical and moral suffering.

"We had either a lunatic or a pretending lunatic in our cell—a Soviet naval officer who was accused of taking part in an armed conspiracy. From time to time he dressed himself in a woman's bathing costume and gave out naval commands about the preparation of the ship for fighting. Up to the last moment I was not sure whether he was really a lunatic or tried to simulate madness to save his life.

Some of the cynical prisoners in the cell, knowing how often it is done, told me that the man was merely simulating madness. Anyhow, none of the G.P.U. officials took the trouble to ascertain which was the case, or to examine him at all."

Both formerly and now, the conditions of prisoners who have been condemned is better than that of those awaiting trial or sentence, and it must be stated that both in 1920 and 1931 prisoners awaiting trial were often subjected to "third degree" methods which included physical violence and even torture.

M. Abramovitch, one of the exiled Russian Socialists and a member of the Executive Committee of the Labour and Socialist (Second) International, certifies in the course of an article which appeared in *Vorwärts* (September 14, 1930) that: "I think it is my duty to declare publicly that from the time of the so-called Shachinsky trial, evidence is more and more frequently obtained which proves that the G.P.U. apply to an increased extent and by mass methods, the practices of the Inquisition in order to secure statements from prisoners."

Even without recourse to physical torture, the shock to the prisoner of being torn from his family and placed in prison without any knowledge of the charge against him, or any "rights at law," must obviously cause mental torture to any but the most callous. The suspect has not even the right to communicate with his family, his captors are empowered to execute him without trial, and to leave his family in ignorance concerning his fate.

The severity of the punishment meted out for offences against the dictatorship is thrown into proportional relief when it is remembered that the heaviest penalty which may be incurred under the Soviet Code for any non-political crime is the maximum sentence of ten years' imprisonment for murder. In the case of murderers of good conduct, I was informed by the Governor of the Lefortovsky Isolator (prison) at Moscow, it is customary to permit them to participate in the merciful ruling which allows those serving sentences for crimes of a non-political nature to have two weeks' holiday outside the prison in each year! This is a concession not granted to those other "criminals" charged with the more heinous crimes of "counter-revolutionary activities" or even counter-revolutionary "sentiments"!

In the early days of the revolution, exile was not used as a method of punishment for political prisoners for obvious reasons. Neither towns nor prisons were organised in outlying provinces. Chaos reigned. There were no trains to convey prisoners from the main cities and no supervision when they reached their destinations.

To-day exile is a weapon more widely resorted to even than in Czarist days. The number of persons sentenced to "simple" exile, forced labour camps, and the most dreaded place of all, the Solovetsky Islands in the Arctic Sea, cannot be computed with any certainty. I have mentioned elsewhere that in June, 1930, the number of political

prisoners serving sentences of exile with forced labour in the timber camps of Northern Russia, and in the new cotton plantations in Southern Asia, was 140,000. That figure was arrived at after most careful research, but I admit the possibility of a wide margin of error.¹

The majority of those exiled are sent to isolated villages in the north, in Turkestan, and other remote regions, to districts that are sometimes hundreds of miles away from railways, where there exists no possibility of communicating with the outside world, of getting books or escaping.

All exiles are under the strict supervision of local detachments of the G.P.U. Those sentenced to "simple" exile, without compulsory labour, may take work in a local office or on a farm, and it not infrequently happens that the presence of intelligent men in very remote parts is highly valued by the local Soviet officials, who suffer from the same monotony of existence which afflicts the exiles.

Those in exile cannot correspond with their families without letters passing a censor (most letters in Russia, of all varieties, are subject to scrutiny), and, owing to the conditions in which they live, often find it impossible to have their families with them in their enforced retreat.

When a wife does choose to face the unknown with her husband, she immediately loses her "home" in the city, which is occupied by others the moment she leaves. Overcrowding is frequently as great in country villages of exile as it is in Moscow or other cities, with the result that extreme difficulty is experienced in finding any accommodation at the end of the journey.

If a wife accompanies her husband into exile, both parents must face the fact that there will be no opportunity of securing an education for their children. Even if the wife stays behind, the chances of educational facilities for the children of a man sentenced for a political offence are slender and depend upon the decision of the authorities. Cases are known in which the wives of political exiles, after many years of happy married life, have declared, untruthfully, that they had divorced their husbands, or even never been married at all, in a desperate effort to dissociate their children from political stigma and to secure for them places in a secondary school.

In most cases, the family stays behind to face an uncertain future, for the breadwinner in exile can rarely give any financial help to his family. In this respect, exile causes more suffering to-day, when savings are gone, than did the same sentence in Czarist days, when many exiles had financial means.

The privilege, extended to exiles in Czarist times, of travelling

¹ According to an estimate published early in 1931 by M. Abramovitch, exiled Menshevik leader, "during the last two years two million peasants and workers were arrested and imprisoned by the G.P.U. and more than one million were sentenced to forced labour," but it is not possible to obtain confirmation of these figures.

second-class upon payment of the double fare for prisoner and custodian, no longer exists. The exiles are now herded together—intellectuals, workers, priests and crooks—often in cattle trucks.

The train in which a foreigner was travelling in the region of the new cotton plantations in Asiatic Russia a few months ago, stopped at a remote wayside station. *On the branch line nearby stood a collection of cattle trucks, in which were packed, like human sardines, a motley collection of peasants. It was a hot day, yet the doors of the trucks were locked to prevent the inmates from leaving them, and beside the train stood a solitary G.P.U. armed guard.

The foreigner, an engineer in no way biassed against Communism, took advantage of the guard being called away to cross the track and to ask the inmates of one truck who they were and whither they were going.

For a few minutes no one answered him ; just gazed back at him with suspicious eyes. Then one bearded giant, more impetuous than the rest, spoke up.

"We are *kulaki* (independent peasants)," he said. "Our farms have been stolen from us and we are going into exile as unpaid labourers in the cotton fields." *

That reminds me of an anecdote. I was being shown over the workers' library attached to one of the largest factories at Leningrad. Coming to a large group of shelves my host said : "All those books deal with the campaign against the *kulaki*," and then added : "You may have heard of them. They were the peasants with capitalist minds who tried to sabotage the collectivisation policy this spring. But Stalin soon dealt with them."

Those sentenced to "simple" exile are required to remain in the village or town to which they are sent. There they may rent a room, which is usually paid for out of the proceeds of ordinary manual labour—farming, cleaning the streets, etc. The more fortunate and intellectual among them may succeed in obtaining more congenial work, as clerks, engineers, and assistants in the offices of the local officials, where their training may be put to good use.

Should any disturbance occur in the village or region, whatever the underlying cause, the first action of the authorities is to arrest all exiles in the vicinity.

In another chapter I record the story of one of the exiled Menshevik leaders—a doctor—who, by tending the sick, became one of the most popular men in the district to which he had been sent. Such popularity, in spite of the official disapproval involved in the sentence of exile, is by no means rare.

In another instance a man whose intellect had brought him into prominence in pre-war Russia, despite no accident of high birth, became so universally respected in the village to which he was banished by the Soviet authorities that he secured a position of real power in the local Soviet.

The irregularity of an exile becoming one of the leaders of a village community reached the ears of the district Soviet, which ordered an investigation. Shortly after the offender was moved to another district, a thousand miles away. A story not without humour for outsiders and not without tragedy to the victim, to whom the loss of work may mean starvation.

The conditions under which live those sentenced to exile in forced labour camps—a type of punishment which had no counterpart in Czarist Russia—are much more severe, and are dealt with in the next chapter.

Here I may add that in Russia the dividing line between “forced” and “free” labour is often difficult to define.

Many of those sentenced to “simple” exile without any hard labour attaching to their punishment are condemned, by inexorable economic pressure, to undertake what is scarcely distinguishable from forced labour. Particularly is this the case of those exiles, forming the majority, who are banished to the north.

In that region the timber industry represents practically the only means of earning the wherewithal to buy food. Therefore, the great bulk of the population in Northern Russia, including all exiles sent to that region, must perforce accept work in the timber-lands, at such pay as is available, or starve. There is no alternative.¹ But technically, it is quite correct to say that these exiles and inhabitants “freely” engage in contracts to undertake the work of preparing Russia’s great annual timber crop both for the home market and for export. Only the political prisoners, sentenced by administrative order to exile (usually for three years) with forced labour, may not even make this choice between working or starving.

Exile, however, is but one of the many forms which the Red Terror takes. The necessity for violence arises partly from the very nature of the structure of the Soviet State.

In Western countries, if an employee is inefficient, lazy, slack or dishonest in carrying out his duties, the remedy is simple. He is dismissed. But in Russia the State is the only employer, and the employee guilty of neglect or dishonesty finds himself not only out of a job, but very probably on trial for his life. The iron discipline of the Workers’ State has made unsatisfactory or slipshod work a counter-revolutionary offence.

¹ Under a decree of the People’s Commissariat of Labour of the U.S.S.R. dated October 9, 1930, the Soviet Government is empowered to regulate the supply of labour according to the requirements of industry. This decree reads: “(1) In view of the great shortage of labour in all branches of State industry, insurance bureaux are requested to discontinue payment of unemployment benefit. (2) Labour exchanges are instructed to take all necessary measures in order that the unemployed be immediately sent to work, and of these the first to be sent are persons entitled to draw unemployment benefit. (3) Unemployed persons are to be drafted not only to work in their own trades, but also to other work, necessitating special qualifications. (4) No excuse for refusal of work, with the exception of illness, supported by a medical certificate, should be considered. Refusal to work carries with it removal from the registers of the labour exchange.”

Many of the minor trials reported from Russia arise from this fact. Thus in January, 1931, ten "fuel directors" of factories and dwelling-houses were charged at Moscow with having failed to carry out general orders to reduce the consumption of fuel by 25 per cent, as required by an order issued by the Supreme Economic Council.

Within a few weeks of the passing of this decree, designed to overcome the fuel crisis then threatening the progress of the Five Year Plan, a whole series of trials of those "guilty" of extravagance in the use of fuel had been arranged at Moscow, Leningrad, Nijni-Novgorod, Rostov and other cities.¹

Similarly, penalties for "breaches" in the "transport front" have recently been increased. Under a new instruction issued by the Central Executive Committee, breaches of discipline among railway workers may be punished by terms of imprisonment of up to ten years, without right of appeal against the sentence; where "sabotage" is suspected, the fault is punishable by death, with the confiscation of all possessions. This same instruction forbids railway workers to leave their employment until the completion of the Five Year Plan.

Many cases might be quoted here to show that the strict and sweeping powers possessed by the controllers of Russian industry are freely used.

If this disciplinary system is severe, the official attitude to those who are not of proletarian origin is even more ruthless.

A young woman dined in public in a Leningrad hotel with an American visitor and upon her return to her flat found the G.P.U. waiting for her. For three hours they cross-examined her concerning what she had told the visitor. At the end of that time they agreed to overlook it, but warned her that if any more "conversations" occurred she would be arrested.

A young man sought admission to a Soviet school. He was told that the small number of places reserved for the sons and daughters of the "petty bourgeoisie," or private traders, were filled and there was no room.

"But I am not the son of a private trader," he replied. "My father was a doctor, and my mother has never worked. Surely I am not to be penalised because my father was not a labourer?"

The Soviet official turned up the records and shook his head. "I am sorry," he said, "but your mother ranks as a private trader, and therefore you cannot enter this school."

The young man asked for evidence, and then discovered that he was debarred from any education because in 1921, at the time of the famine and civil war, his mother had been driven to sell her last remaining valuables, including jewellery and a fur coat, in the Moscow streets in order to buy him food.

For that "offence" she was branded for life. She had saved her

¹ *The Times*. January 30, 1931.

son from starvation only at the cost of wrecking his hopes of following his father into the medical profession.

The Soviet reply to this and similar cases of vindictive persecution in the sphere of education, is that as 80 per cent of the population of Russia are workers and peasants, it is only just that 80 per cent of all places in the schools and universities should be reserved for the children of these classes, especially as these children often have illiterate parents and therefore not the same facilities for home education as has the child of the *bourgeoisie*.

Admittedly the difficulties of providing an education for all within measurable time are great. Admittedly the authorities in Russia have done much for education. But can class distinctions of this nature ever be justified? More especially when their true nature is revealed by the fact that if a child disowns his parents, and leaves his *bourgeois* home, he is admitted as a "proletarian" to the very schools which formerly refused him a place? It is hard, in the face of this evidence, not to believe that the difficulty is political rather than educational.

Another phase of the Terror is the "drive" against the *kulaki* or independent peasants. This movement, which aimed at the collectivisation of the countryside and the disappearance of the individual peasant-farmer, and led to widespread excesses in country districts during the early months of 1930, is dealt with elsewhere. The degree of ruthlessness put forth to hasten this agrarian reform may be judged by the statement made by Larin at the Communist Party Conference in December, 1929, when that leader objected to Stalin's agricultural programme because it involved the "physical destruction of 5,000,000 *kulaki*"—a speech which caused Larin to be publicly reproved for his "humane tendencies."

Yet another aspect of Communist activities against the "opposition" is represented by the anti-religious movement. (See Chapter V.) Thousands of priests and monks have been deprived not only of their political rights (no church official possesses a vote in Russia to-day), and their livelihood, but their liberty or life.

One further aspect of the denial of liberty must be noted. This is the inhuman system of hostages by which the Soviet Government has chosen to protect itself from attacks both inside Russia and without, and under which the innocent are made to suffer for the guilty.

The system of hostages was introduced as a weapon of defence in the days of the civil war. Then peasant-hostages were shot as a punishment for the desertion of recruits from the Red Armies or for the non-payment of grain taxes. After the attempted assassination of Lenin in 1918, large numbers of innocent persons were executed as hostages.

Since that time the system of hostages has been extended and regularised, so that to-day it is an integral part of the Soviet methods of the defence of the State. Few Communists are appointed to diplomatic or trading posts in foreign countries unless there is some

near relative—a parent, wife or children—who can be held in Russia as a guarantee of loyalty. Should the official refuse to return to Moscow when recalled, he knows well that his family will suffer for his default.

Despite this harsh and indeed, inhuman ruling, it was officially announced at the Communist Party Congress held in Moscow in 1930 that since 1926 two hundred officials serving the U.S.S.R. abroad had refused to return home when ordered to do so. Most of those men escaped from the Communist rule at the expense of those held as hostages for their good behaviour. A few only were more fortunate.

In the case of one man who, until recently, held a high position in the offices of the Soviet State trading organisation, in a European capital, his mother remained in Moscow as "hostage." His record as a proletarian was good, and when his mother's eyesight began to fail, necessitating a visit to a famous German oculist, the authorities permitted her to visit Germany for a fortnight. While in Berlin, she sent a postcard to her son telling him of the treatment she was receiving.

That postcard showed him the way out of the problem which had been perplexing his mind for weeks—how to avoid returning to Russia, and continuing in the service of a Government with whose creed he now profoundly disagreed, without causing suffering to his mother.

He cabled warning her not to return to Russia on any account, and followed the cable with a letter in which he asked her to meet him in Paris. Having seen her there, he severed connections with his country and from that moment became one of the "traitors" who have, in Bolshevik jargon, become "infected with the *bourgeois virus*."

Three years ago a young Bolshevik student was permitted to proceed to Paris to attend a course of technical studies in that city. Such was the pride of the young man, upon his arrival in France, in the achievements of the Communists that he was most unpopular with the small circle of Russian *émigrés* which had, despite his views, taken pity on the young man's loneliness in a strange city.

For twelve months he complained about every aspect of French life, maintaining that on every point life in Russia was better, saner and happier. No one attempted to argue with him, for those in contact with him remembered that he had to return to Moscow at the end of three years, otherwise his family there would incur heavy penalties, and it appeared that his enthusiasm for Communism was, therefore, all for the best.

After the boy had spent two years in Paris, it was noticed that he had stopped making comparisons that were invidious to France. Six months later he had lost his high spirits, and become quiet, nervous and thin.

One day he poured out the secret trouble which had become a constant nightmare.

"What can I do?" he asked. "I feel that I cannot go back. I hate the very thought. Yet if I don't my father will be arrested. I cannot let him suffer for my cowardice."

It was a dilemma which revealed the essential cruelty of the hostage system, and also of the Government which claims the right to regulate the movements of its citizens. Yet there was no escape from it and in the end the young man gathered up his courage and departed for Moscow, his one consolation the fact that no one who knew of the conflict through which he had passed was likely to send the information to the authorities.

But how can one speak dispassionately of the countless human tragedies such as this; of a Government, claiming to be civilised, which employs such a weapon? The most crushing comment upon it comes, not from any capitalist or enemy of Russian freedom, but from Prince Kropotkin, the veteran Russian revolutionary who paid the penalty for raising his voice in aid of the cause of freedom by living for years in exile in Britain, and who returned to Russia after the Communist revolution only to die shortly after, a disillusioned and saddened man.

In a letter addressed to Lenin at the time when further shootings of hostages were imminent, dated December, 1920, Prince Kropotkin wrote: "In *Isvestia* and *Pravda* there appears an official announcement that the Soviet Government has decided to take hostages from the groups of Socialist Revolutionaries, from the White Guards of national and tactical centres, and from officers of Wrangel's Army, and that, in the event of any attempt upon the lives of the Soviet leaders, it has been decided to destroy these hostages without pity.

"Is there among you no one who could remind you that such measures, which are a return to the worst time of the Middle Ages and religious wars, are not worthy of a people who undertook to build a future Society on Communistic foundations, and that those for whom the future of Communism is dear could not employ such measures?"

"Has no one among you considered what a hostage is?"

"It means that a man is put into prison not as one who is punished for his crime; that he is kept in prison to frighten, by his death, your enemies. 'Kill one of ours and we will kill so many of yours'—but ~~is not this~~ the same as to take a man every morning out to execution and then take him back to his cell, just telling him 'Wait. Not to-day.'

"Do not your comrades understand that it is equal to the re-establishment of torture, not only for hostages but for their relatives, too? I hope no one among your comrades would reply that it is also not a very happy life for those who govern. For, even among kings are some who regard attempts upon their lives as a 'peculiarity of

their profession.' But revolutionaries—as, for example, Louise Michel—take upon themselves the defence before the courts of those who made attempts upon their lives, or refuse to prosecute them, as did Malatesta and Volterrine.

"Even kings and prelates long ago refused to utilise such barbarous methods as hostages for self-defence. How can you who profess new life and who are building a new social structure utilise such weapons for self-defence from your enemies?"

But, despite all protests, the terror remains, a blot which the good works of the Soviet machine cannot wash out. It imposes a strain upon the stoutest heart, and poisons life not only for the remnants of the dispossessed *bourgeoisie* who drag out weary lives in Russia, but also for many of the noblest and best of the newer generation.

It affects even those who know that they, personally, are beyond the reach of the long arm of the G.P.U. A British engineer, who had worked in Soviet Russia for four years, said to me not long ago: "When I come back to London, people think that I have persecution mania. They simply will not believe the truth. But I have lost too many friends in Russia to be mistaken." That bitter comment summarises, better than anything I can write, the results of life in a country where violence and suppression are the only weapons that the ruling oligarchy understand.

CHAPTER III

FORCED LABOUR: THE FACTS

"As to the forced labour . . . there are, of course, in the Soviet Union people sentenced by court to hard labour. The tendency of our legislation is not to sentence to a simple but nevertheless demoralising deprivation of freedom, but to such a form of punishment, which, being connected with some productive work, prepares the return of the prisoners to normal life by training them in their work and thus raising their dignity and qualifications. This organisation of reformatory cause is not regarded as a defect by us, but an enormous merit of our legislation."

M. DANISHEVSKY, President of the U.S.S.R. Timber Export Corporation.

AMONG all the punitive measures fashioned by the Soviet Government for rendering innocuous its political opponents, the most widely used—and widely discussed in foreign countries—is the power possessed by the G.P.U. of sentencing any citizen who comes under suspicion to exile with forced labour in the penal concentration camps located in the forest regions of Northern Russia and elsewhere.

To these labour camps have been banished by administrative process during the past four years, many tens of thousands of Russian citizens who were considered politically dangerous to the régime, and many thousands of *kulaks* (rich peasants) dispossessed of their land and homes during the great "drive" for the collectivisation of the countryside.

The remote situation of these centres of what may correctly be described slave labour—many of the camps can only be reached after a journey of days or weeks from Moscow, including many miles on foot—and the disinclination of the Soviet Government to permit foreign observers to investigate the conditions under which live those sentenced to exile with forced labour, have resulted in the circulation of a whole mass of charges and counter-charges, the effect of which has been to obscure, rather than reveal, the true situation.

The difficulties which must be faced in attempting to establish the facts have had international repercussions—in the economic boycott imposed on Russian timber by the United States Government, on the ground that convict labour is employed in the export timber trade in Northern Russia, and in the advocacy, by leading British statesmen, of similar action by Great Britain. As more is likely to be heard abroad of this phase of Russia's penal methods, I may add, before attempting to relate the true conditions under which live the exiles in forced labour camps, and under which the Russian timber trade is at present carried on, that it is no purpose of this book to discuss the controversial aspects of that trade, or to examine the charges of "dumping" levelled at the Soviet Government. Here I am concerned only with the question of whether or not the political prisoner in Russia who is unfortunate enough to be sentenced to exile with forced labour for his opinions serves that sentence under conditions which are as good as might reasonably be expected, having regard to

all the factors governing life in Russia to-day, or whether the hardships of his lot are aggravated through deliberate policy or neglect on the part of the authorities.

There are three distinct classes of workers engaged in the timber industry in Northern Russia. They are (a) convict labour, represented by political prisoners confined in the concentration camps; (b) the forced labour of many thousands of *kulaks* who have been banished to the north without any means of existence apart from engaging in timber work (which accounts for 90 per cent of the whole labour of that region); and (c) native or indentured labour carried out by free workers recruited either from the population of the region, or drafted to the forests under arrangements made by the Soviet Timber Trust.

By far the largest of these three groups is the last. While the number of workers employed in the timber industry under trade union contracts is certainly a big proportion of the whole of the labour available for this work, contradictory statements emanating from Soviet sources make it difficult to quote an exact figure. Thus, Mr. A. L. Gorsky, joint managing-director of the Russian Wood Agency, Ltd., recently declared that the total number of all persons occupied in timber work in Northern Russia "seldom exceeds 2,000,000 and is at present about 1,200,000."¹ M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, put the figure for the 1930-31 season at 1,134,000 workers "all engaged on the usual conditions of free labour and the labour of prisoners has nothing to do with timber work,"² while Mr. Danishevsky, President of the U.S.S.R. Timber Export Corporation, has claimed that during the same season "there were occupied in the Soviet Union *over two million men* engaged on a basis of voluntary contracts."³ It will be seen, therefore, that discrepancies exist even in the statements of the official spokesmen of the Soviet Union.

It may reasonably be assumed, however, that the actual number of persons engaged on timber work in Northern Russia at the present time is around one million and a quarter, exclusive of exiled *kulaks*, who number many thousands, and political prisoners sentenced without trial to periods of confinement in the forced labour camps where timber work is a compulsory task.

Those voluntarily undertaking work in the timber industry (whose labour, according to Soviet statements, supplies the whole of the export trade) are engaged on conditions laid down in collective agreements concluded between the State Timber Trusts and the Agricultural and Timber Workers' Union.

"The agreement provides for an eight-hour day and increased payment in case of overtime. The wages under the agreement for timber fellers are 1 rouble 75 kopecks a day (about 3/9), for

¹ *British Russia Gazette and Trade Outlook*. March, 1931.

² Speech delivered at the All-Union Congress of Soviets at Moscow on March 8, 1931.

³ *Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1931.

sawyers 2 roubles, 20 kopecks (about 4/9). The wages for peasants with their own horses are about 3 roubles 20 kopecks (about 6/-). To allow comparison I must add that in 1912 the usual wages of a tree cutter were about 67 kopecks (about 1/5) a day.

"The collective agreement provides also for the right of every worker to cease his work by giving notice either six days in advance (in the case of workers paid fortnightly), or one day in advance (in the case of workers paid weekly)."¹

A refutation that the workers so engaged were in any sense "forced" to undertake timber work, was made by the same Comrade Becker, Chairman of the Russian Wood and Timber Workers' Union, in an interview,² in the course of which he declared that evidence of forced labour in lumber camps was based upon completely false evidence.

"It is absurd," he continued, "to talk about compulsion in regard to 1,600,000 (*sic*) people employed in camps scattered over tens of thousands of square miles. A whole army would be required to compel this number of people to work. The only thing the Government is called upon to do—and this because the lumber districts are so sparsely populated—is to assist migration there. This migration is based on a voluntary agreement between the Government organisations engaged in timber production and the workers, which are usually formed into groups.

"Every worker receives a copy of the agreement, together with his pay-book. The agreement defines strictly the obligations both of the employer and the worker. The worker receives his travelling expenses to and from the camp, extra food rations, and is insured against illness and accidents."

According to M. Danishevsky, "the average daily ration consists of 2½ lbs. of bread, about ½ lb. of cereal, about 1 lb. of fish, and various quantities of other provisions. The trusts also supply the workers at the timber operations with sheepskins (coats), mittens, high boots and so on."

Probably at least four-fifths of all labour employed in timber work in Northern Russia is recruited under these conditions. Two comments only need be made concerning this aspect of the Soviet timber question. The first—whether the insistent demands made by the Soviet authorities to various districts that so many labourers must be "mobilised" within a fixed limit of time can be carried out without resort to methods indistinguishable from compulsion—need not detain us. It is at least doubtful, for in Russia to-day economic pressure, with all supplies controlled by the State, is a powerful weapon. What is not in doubt is that, if Comrade Becker had

¹ Statement by Mr. Becker, *Pravda*, January 14, 1931.

² *Manchester Guardian*, January 15, 1931.

intended his statement to be taken as covering the entire timber industry of Russia, he could scarcely have refrained from making some reference to the forced labour camps, staffed by political offenders, the existence of which can scarcely have escaped the notice of the Chairman of the Wood and Timber Workers' Union.

The second point, established by ample independent evidence, is that, while it is reasonable to admit that conditions in the timber industry generally have improved during the past ten years, and that the Russian Government hopes to improve them still further, it remains true that in certain areas, probably owing to lack of supplies or faulty organisation, those conditions fall lamentably short of the relatively high standard described in the pronouncements of Comrade Becker.

Evidence in support of this statement is contained in the following brief account of "free labour" conditions in the Russian forests given in the course of a sworn affidavit by Nikolai Lukin, a refugee from Russian Karelia, reproduced in *The Times* (January 13, 1931) :

"To each village a certain job of forest work, based on certain calculations, is allotted. The able-bodied inhabitants of a village are told off, each of whom it is calculated is able to chop a certain amount of wood—for instance, from three to five cubic metres a day. The number of days in such a chopping period is calculated at, say, ninety days. By multiplying the number of able-bodied persons in a village, the measure of wood per day, and the number of days for chopping, the amount of work which is to be done by the village is arrived at. The labourer who does not get his measure of work completed is fined severely: for example, last winter the brother of the narrator had failed from weariness to complete his job, to the extent of twenty cubic metres, for which he was fined 100 roubles.

"One of the difficulties is the obtaining of trained forestry technical staff. As forest-masters and forest engineers are not willing to work in Karelia, where the conditions are wretched . . . a method for keeping them in Karelia has been devised: for the least mistake or fault in their work legal proceedings are instituted against them 'for economic counter-revolutionary practices.' The narrator cites as an instance that one of his colleagues had signed an estimate according to which sledges were ordered from the State workshops for work in the forests. This estimate had been made out by one of his assistants, who had made a mistake in his calculations. The result was that the engineer was arrested, and was only allowed after many weeks to continue his work, but the State withheld one-half of his salary."

Independent testimony regarding conditions was contained in statement made by Mr. J. F. Stewart, a Consulting Forest

Engineer, published in the *Manchester Guardian* (February 10, 1931):

"I was recently engaged on behalf of a London trust company in inspecting forests in the north of Russia, which the company wished to obtain by way of concession from the Government, stretching from the Onega to the Siberian border and beyond," stated Mr. Stewart. "I travelled thousands of miles through the forests, and visited, fed in, and lived in the lumber camps wherever I went. I do not hold any brief for the Soviet Government and its methods, and I saw nothing that would induce me to live in Russia. I was not on any conducted tour, but I went wherever my work called me, without regard to the wishes of the Government, who, I must say, never placed any obstacle in my path.

"I do not intend to express any opinion on the question of slave labour. Lumbering is one of the roughest occupations in the world at the best of times, and no weakling can stand up to it. Nor can anyone stand the life if pitched into it without any preparation. It is particularly rough and hard in North Russia. The population is widely scattered and roads scarce, and transport, especially in winter, could not be much more difficult than it is. Food is not grown in abundance locally, and what is grown and what can be imported is wanted for the normal population. If the Government sent up many extra mouths they would find it next to impossible to feed them.

"The camps themselves are quite good, and mostly a good deal better than I have often built for my men and myself in other countries. They are constructed of heavy logs, caulked with moss. The larger ones have separate apartments for eating and sleeping, for drying clothes, and for cooking. All are well-heated by flues from the cooking stoves, and firewood, naturally, is plentiful. The beds are only one long shelf, about two feet from the ground and six or seven feet from front to back, and on these, without regard to sex, the workers sleep. There is no bedding, but none is required, as the places are much overheated and the Russian worker does not undress. In the smaller camps there is only one large apartment for cooking, eating, drying clothes and sleeping, but I have stayed in these and found no discomfort. I was not impressed with the food given me, black bread and weak tea, but it seemed all the people expected, and I must say they looked well. . . .

"The work itself is not unduly trying to a healthy man who is used to it, but it can be deadly to the townsman, or one who has not been brought up to it. The felling and trimming of the trees, and even the amount expected, as reported by refugees, would be laughed at by, for example, a Scottish woodsman, who could do the whole day's work in a couple of hours and think nothing of it. To an inexperienced Russian, I can well imagine the task set out for him to be completely impossible."

Mr. Stewart concludes his statement with the following comment :

" It may be perfectly true that conditions are appalling in the lumber camps, that food is scarce, that thousands are dying from hunger, hard work and exposure. But, if so, I can well imagine it to be the result of very faulty organisation and from the inability of the average Russian official to cope with stern facts instead of theories."

Such is the best, and the worst, of the available evidence, regarding the conditions under which live and work the four-fifths of the labourers engaged in the timber camps of Northern Russia. What of the life of the remaining fifth—whose presence in Northern Russia is due neither to labour freely offered, nor to economic pressure, but to the existence of the Terror?

Soviet apologists seek to explain away the existence of forced labour camps by statements that " there are, of course, in the Soviet Union people sentenced by court to hard labour."¹ But in not one of the inspired statements of Soviet officials that I have seen is there any allusion to the real source from which comes this convict labour, which is not provided by decisions of the courts, but by the power vested in the G.P.U. to arrest any person suspected of " counter-revolutionary sentiments," and to pass sentence of three years' exile with forced labour by administrative measure, without trial and without appeal. For every forced labourer sent to the north of Russia by decision of a Soviet Court, a hundred have passed along that same road by order of the G.P.U.

The concentration camps in which they serve their sentences are organised jointly by the G.P.U. and the State timber trusts, and are, with one exception—at Almaty, in Russian Turkestan—all situated in the extreme north of Russia.

When one seeks enlightenment from Soviet sources concerning conditions in those camps, further contradictions make the task of the enquirer difficult. Thus, concerning the length of the working day in the prison camps, M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, has stated : " The length of the working day is fixed at eight hours in all the camps for the prisoners,"² whereas Mr. A. L. Gorsky, of the Russian Wood Agency, Ltd., declares that " actually in the northern districts during the felling season the maximum daylight lasts six hours and therefore if this is true (a statement that prisoners work sixteen or eighteen hours a day) the prisoners would have to fell trees for ten to twelve hours in total darkness, the impossibility of which is obvious."³

The seeker after truth is further confounded by yet another statement, made by Smirnov, Chairman of the All-Union Combine of the

¹ M. Danishevsky in *British Russian Gazette*. February, 1931.

² Speech delivered at the All-Union of Soviets, Moscow, March 8, 1931.

³ *British Russian Gazette*. March, 1931.

Timber Industry (*Isvestia*, January 30, 1931) that "until the October revolution, the working day in the timber camps used to be ten, eleven and sometimes twelve hours long." If in Northern Russia during the timber-felling season there is only six hours of daylight, and if it is "impossible," as Mr. Gorsky has stated, to work in darkness, how can the Czarist working day of twelve hours be explained? Most people will prefer to assume that what was possible for "free labourers" in pre-revolution days is equally possible for political prisoners deprived of their liberty by the G.P.U. and certainly not treated with any tenderness while serving their sentences of hard labour, as I shall show.

Dismissing the contradictory statements emanating from official sources, what are the facts? The reports which follow are necessarily fragmentary—it is impossible to secure any complete picture of conditions in the whole of these forced labour camps—but they serve to reveal the essential facts as they actually exist to-day. And I may add that they refer only to conditions in the penal settlements and have no reference to the "free" labour camps already mentioned.

The number of political exiles working in these forced labour camps has been variously estimated at from 140,000 to 650,000. The high death-rate (natural in view of the fact that all the prisoners are either intellectuals or *kulaki*, both classes entirely unfitted for forest work), the widely scattered camps and constantly changing personnel of the prisoners, make it difficult even for the handful of exiles who have succeeded in escaping to give any reliable figure, but any estimate in excess of 200,000 should be accepted with reserve.

These exiles have to live in special buildings, often of a primitive kind, within the camp precincts. A ration of work is allotted to the prisoners, who toil in groups and are taken to and from the place of work under close guard. Occasionally, for special reasons, intellectuals sent to these camps are given work less arduous than tree-felling, such as clerical work, surveying and so on. But the number of those employed in this way must obviously be very small. For the great majority, however unfitted by health or experience, there is no escape from the forced labour gang and the forest.

That the concession of alternative work is not easily obtained is shown by the experience of a former Moscow industrialist, who, after serving the Soviet Union loyally as a technician, was suddenly arrested on a charge which was absurd as well as false, and banished by administrative order to serve a term of years in a forced labour camp.

Two months after the departure of this man from Moscow, his wife secured permission to visit him in his place of confinement. The timber camp was situated about thirty kilometres from the railway. There was, of course, no accommodation for unofficial visitors at the camp itself, so the wife had to find a room in the nearest village, from which she journeyed daily to see her husband after the

day's work and the evening meal were over—the time laid down for such visits.

Upon her arrival, she was both surprised and horrified at the change wrought by two months of the stringent discipline, privations and hard labour of camp life. Her husband was weak, had lost weight and had no proper clothing for so severe a climate. At their first meeting he complained about the food, consisting mainly of inferior soup and black bread. A small amount of money is credited to each exile for his work, but such food as is available has to be paid for at prices which are nicely adjusted so that, after a hard week's work of timber-cutting, there are few kopecks left when the "soup and bread" bill has been liquidated. Thus the exiles in that particular camp were working long hours at exhausting labour, for which the majority were quite unfitted, for the price of the scanty diet provided by the authorities. Here let me add that criminals sent to Siberia to serve hard labour sentences under the Czars were similarly paid for their work and charged for their food—with the same result. But it was left for the Communists to extend this system to political offenders.

During the eight weeks that had elapsed between the prisoner's departure for the north and his wife's visit, she had despatched several parcels to him, but none had reached the camp. Nor had her letters, sent direct, been received. The only letter which reached him had been forwarded through a local resident.

When I saw her, the wife described to me how one night she was permitted to prepare a meal for her husband composed of food she had brought with her, and to eat it with him. In anticipation of this reunion, she had carried to the north butter and sugar from Moscow, and bought a chicken in the village where she was staying.

"I have never seen my husband so happy," she told me, "not only because we were united again, but because he had the first good meal for two months."

I may add that the events described took place several months ago. The exile is still serving his sentence, which may be prolonged indefinitely without any trial, in the same camp.

In another case within my knowledge a wife succeeded, by reason of a certain "pull" in official circles at Moscow, in arranging for her husband, a political exile, to be transferred from timber-felling to clerical work. This man suffered from a rupture which made him quite unfit for hard physical work, but nevertheless he was allotted a place in a timber-felling gang and by himself would have been unable to secure any change.

The only doctor available in these camps is the general district doctor, and his wife was anxious to arrange for her husband's removal to a camp in a less isolated region, where proper medical attention would be available and the general conditions not so severe. At the moment of writing I learn that she has been promised that shortly

her husband may be liberated from forced labour and "promoted" to serve the remaining months of his sentence in "simple" exile—where he will be able to live in an ordinary house not subject to prison discipline, and his wife be able to visit him without restriction. But these privileges, if they materialise, will only have been made possible by the wife's influence in Communist circles at Moscow.

This prisoner, an industrialist who has all his life started work at 8 a.m., complained bitterly because of the early hour at which the prisoners were led out to work.

There were at the beginning of 1931 nearly 5000 exiles in that one district. All had been sent there for "not more than three years," but as I have noted, the G.P.U. is empowered to prolong their sentences at will. Men without influence are often forgotten and left in confinement indefinitely without any review of their sentences whatever.

Yet another political prisoner from the south of Russia was sent to undergo a sentence of three years' forced labour at a camp established to provide convict workers for the construction of a new railway.

"On this line (from Pinug northward in the direction of Archangel) are situated eleven or thirteen—I do not know exactly—camps," wrote the wife of this exile in sending news of her husband. "Last year Nikolai was at the 11th Camp, and it was for him a real tragedy. To reach the camp he had to walk 120 versts. His felt boots were worn off his feet, his leather boots were stolen, and, as a result, his feet became so badly frozen that up to the time of writing he has not recovered from this injury—open wounds due to frostbite still persist.

"During his first two months in exile he received no letters or parcels from us. Bad and scarce food, and the terrible moral anguish, almost finished him. After leaving hospital, when he received sixteen letters in one batch from us, and some of the food we had sent, he began to recover his spirits. Anyhow, he got through the winter. Early in the summer, he was transferred to the 3rd Camp where navvying and construction work was being carried on. This camp is the nearest to the railway station—20 versts only—and this move immediately resulted in a quicker delivery of the posts and food parcels, but I think what did him most good and gave him new courage to face the future, was my recent visit. Now he is much better in spirits, and bravely bears his painful position. He was afraid that at the end of the summer, when the work of construction will be finished, he, together with other exiles, will be sent as last year to some isolated place. But up till now, although three parties have already gone, he is still at the 3rd Camp. Maybe he was saved because of the effects of frostbite in his feet, which were particularly bad just when the first parties were being moved.

"He still suffers greatly from the dirt and insects which swarm

in the barracks. The insects are of all varieties, of all species and of all dimensions. In barracks he sleeps on wooden shelves together with other prisoners, without covering. Despite the fact that after the medical inspection he was certified as a second category invalid (the first category is comprised of those totally unfitted for any labour whatever), he is still sent to do physical work as though he had been passed as fit. This heavy work is performed in the daytime, and, in addition, he sometimes does clerical duties at night.

"The prison authorities, however, make a certain concession to him on account of his health, allotting him a reduced daily task of physical work."

To this letter, which I have quoted literally as the evidence of a woman who has visited the camp described, the writer adds a note: "I am not complaining. My husband is fortunate at present to be at a good camp, with a comparative absence of brutality such as we hear about elsewhere."

Further light was shed upon conditions in the forced labour camps in the timber-regions in the course of statements made by three escaped Russian prisoners who succeeded in reaching a British port, and whose declarations were forwarded to the Prime Minister by Sir Hilton Young, M.P., on December 11, 1930.

These three men smuggled themselves on board a British ship at Archangel in June, 1930, and as their families are still in Russia, it is not possible to disclose either the names of the men, or the name of the vessel and captain who carried them to Britain. One of the escaped prisoners is a Cossack, another a farmer and the third a shopkeeper. None, be it noted, belonged to the *bourgeois* class.

In the course of their statement, these ex-prisoners—two of whom had been engaged in loading timber at Archangel and the third in felling—gave the following figures of prisoners employed in the timber camps, obtained from prisoners transferred to Archangel from other districts:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------|-----------|
| Vishesky, on North Dvina River | . | . | . | . | 30,000 | prisoners |
| Ussolsk | . | . | . | . | 10,000 | " |
| Penujsky | . | . | . | . | 25,000 | " |
| Kotlas | . | . | . | . | 30,000 | " |
| Solovetsky | . | . | . | . | 20,000 | " |
| Kema | . | . | . | . | 20,000 | " |

"At Archangel," continues the statement, "prisoners who knew any foreign language were forbidden to load foreign ships, as the Soviet Government were afraid they might reveal to representatives of foreign countries the appalling conditions in Russia.

"The prisoners in this camp had to work twelve hours a day with no rest days whatever. They had to cut down or load a certain amount of timber in the twelve hours, but as many of them were ill and weak

they could not do their work in the time allotted, and had to go on working until they had finished. No consideration was made for illness. The prisoners died like flies. They could not stand the long and heavy work in the intense cold and with bad food in their weakened condition.

"The food consisted of 2½lbs. of bread, which was only given to a prisoner if he fulfilled his task. If he could not do so his ration was cut down accordingly. Prisoners seldom got the full amount of 2½lbs. for this reason. Sometimes a prisoner got only a pound of bread a day or less. Occasionally they were given a little fish soup, but nothing else. The soup was made of rotten fish, and was practically uneatable. They were given hot water without tea or sugar. Only a little hot water was given, and the prisoners suffered not only from hunger but also from thirst. Consequently they had to drink the water from the river, which is polluted. Many died from diseases conveyed by the foul water.

"In the camp at Penujsky the prisoners have to sleep in tents where there are 55 degrees of frost until they have built themselves a wooden hut in which to spend the night. In the Archangel camp some of the prisoners are housed in barges on which barracks are built of very thin boards. There are no beds or any kind of sleeping accommodation save a large shelf that goes round the barracks, on which the prisoners sleep. There is not room for all and many have to sleep wherever they can find space, some of them in a sitting position.

"The filth in this camp is impossible to describe. No laundry is obtainable, there are no sanitary conveniences, and the place is swarming with bugs and fleas.

"In all the camps, and particularly in the Archangel camp, if a prisoner tried to escape he was instantly shot in the presence of the other prisoners as an example. Agents of the OGPU (G.P.U.) have only the legal right to shoot prisoners when they try to escape, but if an agent is displeased with a prisoner he will tell him to go to the forest nearby and under the pretence that he is trying to escape shoot him from behind."

I may add that the three Russians concerned expressed their willingness to be cross-examined on any point concerned with what they had said, subject only to their names not being revealed.

Allowing for a very natural resentment against the Government which had exposed them to such harsh treatment, many of their statements, as the reader will notice, are confirmed by evidence obtained from other sources and presented in this chapter. But with regard to their general picture of privations in the forced labour camps, a picture which so shocked the minds of many who read it, it must be remembered that Russia is still a poor and primitive country, and that all classes of the population are, willingly or

unwillingly, enduring increasing privations in order that the Five Year Plan may succeed. The conditions in which the favoured proletarians of, say, the Volga region, live and travel would, if set down without comment, cause a similar shudder of pity in the mind of the foreigner who knows not Russia. The wretched hovels that serve as homes, the rags which clothed the peasants, and the scanty food supplies of that region saddened me when I went there. In these respects conditions have changed but little since Czarist days; clothes are worse for quite understandable reasons, but those same proletarians who assured me that supplies, especially regarding food, are better to-day than in the past are, I think, justified in their opinion. And certainly it is highly significant that the death-rate in Russia from natural causes has been reduced by nearly one-half since 1917, which does not suggest malnutrition, but does suggest that past hardships have made the Russians a sturdy race.

Thus, while the quality of the food issued to exiles in the forced labour camps is in many instances very poor (and even the food given to free workers in the timber industry seemed insufficient and inferior to an unbiased British observer like Mr. Stewart), the nature of the food is what would be expected in view of the difficulties of transport, and where conditions of scarcity and stress exist in Russia—or where a greatly increased population must be provided for at short notice. It may be added that, while the proletarian might live on soup and bread for a short period without any hardship, the degree of privation is more pronounced in the case of intellectuals forced to undertake heavy manual work on such a diet.

In writing these comments, I do not wish to question any of the statements made by the three escaped prisoners, and communicated to the press by Sir Hilton Young, but rather to interpret them on one or two points in order that the true meaning of the conditions described may be better understood by my readers. The fact that all but a fraction of the thousands of prisoners incarcerated in the forced labour camps are guilty of no "crime" except holding opinions unfavourable to the existing régime in Russia, for which they have been deprived of their liberty and their rights as citizens, is horrible enough without giving consideration to any other factors of their case.

Corroboration of the statements of the ex-prisoners was given in the course of a letter written by Mr. H. Moyse-Bartlett (*Times*, January 6, 1931):

"In the summer of 1928 I visited the convict settlement at Kem on the White Sea," said this writer, "spending three weeks there in a vessel loading pit-props for the Yorkshire mines. About 150 convicts were employed in the ship, which lay at an island in the centre of the settlement. At 4.30 a.m. the men were lined up in the compound, apparently being counted and allotted work. Then breakfast: a cup

of hot water and piece of black bread. Work commenced at 7 a.m. and continued until 3 p.m. when an hour's rest was taken, during which dinner—soup and black bread—was issued. The day's work ended at any time between 10 p.m. and 2 o'clock the following morning, according to the circumstances. The men rarely obtained more than four hours' sleep.

"The condition of these unfortunate convicts may well be imagined. By evening the majority of them were scarcely able to stand upright. On the slightest cessation of work they would collapse on the ground and fall asleep instantly. The majority of them were clothed in rags, and all our efforts to give them food, clothes and even cigarette-papers were promptly frustrated by the guards. Sometimes we used to see the latter searching among the piles of the wharf for the bodies of suicides. . . . To get any definite information of conditions apart from what we actually saw was difficult. An atmosphere of intense suspicion characterised all our dealings with the Russian authorities, and the men who acted as interpreters (all convicts) were frequently changed."

Many people doubtless wondered why the names of the three men who escaped from Russia should be kept secret to safeguard their families, considering that the identity of the missing prisoners must be known to the authorities there.

Fortunately for the families concerned, information concerning the correct whereabouts of those "missing" from prison camps is not always easy to obtain and when obtained by the central authorities is frequently, thanks to the harsh discipline of the Soviet machine, inaccurate.

The penalties visited upon guards and prison administration for permitting exiles to escape are severe. For this reason, a successful escape is often hushed up and reported officially as "shot while attempting to escape." No one is likely to travel from Moscow to the north and ask to see the graves of the missing men. If anyone did, there would probably be unmarked graves to show them. Thus it is probable that the official records of the G.P.U. at present contain no report of this escape. To this fact many who have escaped from Russia owe the immunity from arrest of their families still within that country—families which, if they have been told anything at all, mourn their loved ones as dead.

It has been suggested by the Soviet Government that the reports of conditions in the forced labour camps of Northern Russia are grossly exaggerated and untrue. It may well be that such evidence as I have offered in this chapter will be met with a similar denial. If the Soviet authorities believe this to be the case, they have it in their power to expose these "canards" and disprove the charge of ruthless cruelty towards those arrested for political offences by the simple method of issuing permission for correspondents of British and

American newspapers, now resident in Moscow, to visit some of the camps mentioned above and make a full and authentic report upon conditions there. This permission the Russian Government has consistently refused to give, even in the face of grave accusations against its honour. True, the authorities did once meet requests to permit certain correspondents to proceed to the exile settlement on Solovetsky Island, the most notorious camp of all, by producing and showing in Moscow a film purporting to depict the life of prisoners in that camp. But the value of this film as evidence may be judged by the comment of one German correspondent: "It did at least show that for one afternoon, in one section of Solovetsky, the conditions were not too bad!"

But if no impartial observer has succeeded in lifting the veil which shrouds life in the remote concentration camps of the White Sea, an American observer has visited Archangel and placed upon record the conditions in that region.¹ And his evidence establishes clearly one point of importance to foreign nations—that, following international protests, the use of convict labour in loading timber for export, which did in fact exist until 1930 despite reiterated Soviet denials, was then discontinued in view of the danger of embargoes being placed upon the cargoes by the United States and other countries.

"Convict labour is no longer employed by the State timber trust for export production," stated this writer upon his return from Archangel.² "Last year several hundred political and criminal convicts from the dread Solovetsky Island in the White Sea were brought to Archangel to assist in loading ships with lumber and pulp-wood. But following the first protest from Washington the felons were withdrawn from the job and placed on other work or shipped back to the lonely island established by the Czarist régime for revolutionary suspects."

Commenting upon the two classes of workers—the native woodsmen and the exiles—Mr. Wales states:

"The local inhabitants have dwelt in the region all their lives and are better organised and better able to wage the fight for existence than the exiles, deported from warmer climates with only the clothes on their backs and a few bundles of personal belongings to begin life anew amid the Arctic snows" (the writer is speaking of "simple" exile—not forced labour).

"The *kulak* class is being quite 'liquidated' by the Government and the miserable unfortunates are disappropriated and disenfranchised without the necessary credentials even to buy bread from the shops. Their property, homes and live-stock are

¹ Mr. Henry Wales, Russian correspondent of *Chicago Tribune*.

² *Chicago Tribune*, March 30 and 31, 1931.

confiscated and they are permitted to take only the clothing and foodstuff on hand and a few odds and ends like teapots, cutlery and baby carriages when they are rounded up on their farms, escorted to the railway, piled in box-cars like cattle and shipped into exile."

The same writer gives a picture of the reception awaiting the exiled *kulaki* when, upon their arrival at Archangel, they are herded into a building, formerly a church, now used as a "clearing house" for this tragic host:

"The northern end of this city (Archangel), called Khuznichiha, contains two churches. One is closed, and the other has been transformed into a charnel-house. The huge dirty grey brick structure, topped by a bulbous green-tinted dome and the three-barred Orthodox Greek Cross, is the clearing-house for arriving *kulak* exiles until they begin their long tramp over the ice tundras and snow-covered trails to the distant regions to which they are deported.

"The interior of the edifice is jammed with rough board double-deck beds where the *kulaks* are crowded, their entire belongings thrust among filthy vermin-covered quilts and blankets—waiting for the endless march into the Arctic.

"Like wild beasts in the cages of a menagerie they sit, with their great staring eyes peering from emaciated faces, grey, brown, almost black from the crust of dirt. Their withered hands and fingers are like claws and talons, and their great masses of matted hair and long unkempt beards and moustaches have not felt razors for months.

"A horrible fœtid stench of excrement, sweat, filth, corruption and slop pervades the place and almost causes one to vomit when one enters from the pure outside atmosphere. A false roof has been erected over the upper tier of bunks and a couple of big stoves are blazing away. But the heat of several hundred human bodies in the big low room that is never ventilated provides most of the warmth.

"Sprawled amid the ragged bedding and dirty straw, or sitting on the edges of the bunks, legs dangling, these broken men sit there day after day with scarcely enough nourishment to keep life in their bodies. Once a day a tiny ration of black bread, and a handful of barley is doled out to them, and then each cooks up a mess called stew and wolfishly devours it. At night time they prowl the city streets, rummaging in the garbage cans, fighting for offal with dogs and sinister clumsy crowds.

"They are not guarded. A sentry stands in the doorway of the church, but they are permitted to wander about as they cannot escape. Frozen stretches of ice and snow and the pitiless Arctic keep them safer prisoners than any bayonets, cells or locks.

"Nearly all the *kulaks* are middle-aged, at least past forty, and most of them are forty-five or fifty, or older, as befits men who,

by thrift and industry, attained dominating positions in their native villages before expulsion."

It is needless to add anything to that picture of one phase of the life which awaits those who are "named" as enemies of the Communist State.

Most of those sentenced to exile with forced labour, however, never see a city from the moment of their arrest.

Typical of the fate of thousands whom no newspaper man has seen, were the experiences of an Armenian sent into exile for his political opinions. This prisoner had formerly held an administrative position in the Socialist Party of Georgia, and the statement which follows, written since his escape from a forced labour camp, has withstood, in every detail, tests of authenticity made, at my request, by those best able to judge the accuracy of his declaration. This statement will give the reader a true and uncoloured picture of the life that awaits those sentenced to exile with forced labour in Russia to-day. In it, the voice of Russia's exiles speaks to the world.

His statement is as follows :

"On February 18, 1928, my house was searched, I was arrested, and taken to the headquarters of the local G.P.U. There I was kept imprisoned for thirteen months. After heavy and painful cross-examination, I was informed that, although I was liable to execution, it was the intention of the police to send me to Solovetsky.

"In March, 1929, I was sent to Tiflis together with a large group of other prisoners. This group was composed almost entirely of political prisoners, among them many Socialists. At Tiflis I was in prison for ten months. Then, without warning, 150 men, among them myself, were taken from the prison and sent to the railway station, where we were loaded into a railway truck which was so packed that most of us had no room to sit down. In these conditions we travelled to Moscow. Many of the prisoners became ill during the journey. In Moscow we stayed for three days. Evidently sufficient cells were not available, for some of us were confined in the courtyard in the open air. Here we were notified for the first time of our destination—we were being taken to the forced labour camp at Kotlas.

"On January 1, 1930, when all the world was greeting the New Year, we started out on the journey to our new life in Kotlas forced labour camp. Before setting out we were all searched again. Our money was taken, and we received in exchange G.P.U. 'bonds' which are legal tender for food payments in the camps.

"At Kotlas, however, we remained only three days for further examination. Then all our group and others from Moscow were sent northwards to the Arctic Sea. There was no railway so we had to walk 400 versts. This journey was a terrible one. We were halted for rest in the villages, sometimes in school-houses, sometimes in

cattle-yards. Covered with snow, often wet, we were taken into these places, frequently without an opportunity to eat our food. The premises were usually very small, and as everyone was afraid to be left outside in that temperature, and tried to force a way in, the buildings were always filled to overflowing. During the night-time the atmosphere would become quite insupportable. Exit was forbidden, and with over two hundred human beings packed together for twelve hours on end, the rest of the picture may be left to the imagination.

"After these experiences a group of us, in spite of 45 degrees of frost outside, demanded permission to spend the nights in the open air, but our guards refused this request. So our journey continued in the same terrible conditions.

"Every morning we were given one herring and 500 grammes of black bread, which was stale and dry. Then we were ordered to parade and the roll-call was taken. I was told that along that same road had already passed ahead of us 150,000 exiles! How many of them perished on that journey only God knows. From our group very many became ill, especially from among those who were from the cities and who were not accustomed to marching great distances. Many of the townsmen were on the verge of utter collapse. In addition to the rough going, every prisoner had to carry one pood of provisions, bread and herring.

"Upon reaching the forest line we left the villages behind us and had to spend our nights in the open air, or in temporary wooden barracks. As we progressed I saw, in different places, frozen corpses of men. Evidently they were left on the ground until the spring, when it would be possible to bury them.

"We reached the end of our journey in fifteen days, when we arrived at a camp in a place called K—, where the lumber was prepared. Once again the roll-call was taken and we were sorted and specific tasks were allotted to each prisoner. The barrack accommodation proving insufficient for this flood of fresh arrivals, those who had sleeping bags had to sleep outside in the snow.

"One night, at 3 a.m., an officer came into our barrack and we were ordered to come out immediately. Those who were old hands at that camp advised us to obey without delay, because if we did not we should be beaten. In the courtyard we were split up into groups of ten, each under the orders of a prison guard. We were given one herring and 500 grammes of bread apiece. Then each group was equipped with saws, axes and spades and the command was given for the working parties to set out.

"In front of each party was a guard carrying a lantern to light our path. As we found later, our place of labour was 15 versts from the camp. We followed our guard like sheep to the slaughter.

"Upon our arrival at the place of work it was still dark, and we were allowed a short rest before dawn came. Then we were ordered

to clear the snow from around the trees selected for felling. New-comers were set to work beside old hands who instructed us in the work. A certain task was allotted to each group and we were informed that those who completed the set tasks would receive additional food in the evening. Each prisoner had to prepare $3\frac{1}{2}$ cubic metres of timber. This means that we had to fell the tree, clear it of branches, remove the bark and saw the tree according to measurements given to us and, again, to take this timber to a given point for stacking.

“For a new-comer the task was impossible. All day we worked hard. In the evening we were ordered to stop work and return to barracks; no one had fulfilled the set task except a few old prisoners who were woodsmen by profession.

“On arriving at our camp, we were halted in the courtyard, where stood a barrel containing *Uhha* (fish soup). At least, the guards declared it was fish soup. It was made from not very fresh fish which had been boiled without any cleaning. We Caucasians could not eat such dirt, so that first day we refused food. After other prisoners had finished their meal we were driven into the barracks. The warden counted us. We were left alone for the night. But there was little rest—the barrack building was so overcrowded that it was impossible to undress, and our clothes were wet through from the snow outside.

“The guards at this camp, as we discovered later, were, with one or two exceptions, also prisoners—but criminals, not politicals. All our demands that we political exiles should be separated from the criminal prisoners were in vain. Further, after several of our reasonable demands had been made, and refused, the attitude of the camp officials towards the ‘politicals’ became more severe than ever.

“Those of our guards who were not brutal to us were soon transferred elsewhere. It did not take us long to learn that to keep an administrative post in that camp it was necessary to know how to curse, how to beat prisoners and how to sneak. Almost every day some of the prisoners were brought back from the forest frozen or ill. I was myself a witness of one ‘political’ who hanged himself on a tree, being unable to stand further suffering. Almost every evening, when the roll-call was taken, some one would be missing. The greatest number of those who failed to answer to their names were accounted for by attempts to escape.

“Although everyone knew full well that it was almost impossible for such attempts to succeed, and that those caught would be shot down without mercy, attempts were made every day. A successful escape can only be made with the assistance of the peasants living in that region. And those peasants know that anyone who reports the whereabouts of an escaped prisoner is rewarded with half a pood of flour.

“We remained at this camp until May. Then all healthy prisoners were separated and sent on a small river where large stocks of timber,

already cut, had been collected. This timber had been prepared at various spots in the district and brought to the river on sledges driven by horses or tractors.

"The river was still ice-locked, so ice-hammers were handed to us and we were ordered to break the ice and thus clear the river, which we did. While we were thus occupied, another party was shifting the timber into the river so that it could be floated down to the larger river some distance away. The work was heavy. Sometimes the ice cracked beneath our weight, and many exiles were drowned in this way. There were no barracks here so we lived under the stars.

"Despite the heavy nature of the work, however, and the risk involved, we were glad to have escaped from the vermin in the overcrowded barracks. Here all vermin was destroyed because our clothing was so often immersed in water.

"In June a new group of prisoners was drafted to this camp in our stead and we were returned to Kotlas. Back at that centre we found that of 20,000 exiles sent northward with us, only 8,000 had returned. All the rest had perished, some shot down, some drowned in the river, some died from illness and many were just 'missing.' I was told that in all, 25,000 prisoners had perished in forced labour camps in that region.

"Most of us lucky ones who returned to Kotlas were ill with scurvy. Many had lost their teeth, others could not walk. The only remedy which was served out was salt and pickled cabbage. During the time while I was at Kotlas, almost every train from the centre of Russia brought new groups of exiles destined for the camps we had left, mostly peasants with their families. Owing to lack of accommodation they were kept in the open air, while many complained that food was given only to the healthy who could work.

"At Kotlas we were sorted again. The healthy, numbering 300, among them myself, were sent by the North Dvina River to Archangel and then to the White Sea. Others, not sufficiently healthy, went to Ust-Sysolsk.

"Arriving at the White Sea we were placed in a camp called 'Economia.' European ships were loading the timber, and we had to assist in the task. In the absence of any darkness, we worked in shifts—work going on twenty-four hours a day. And here, in addition to our 500 grammes of bread and daily ration of fish, we were given horse-meat.

"Life became impossible for me here. I suffered the mental torture and heavy manual labour for another forty-five days, then decided to escape—even if the attempt cost me my life. One day I was lucky enough to attain my aim."

There can be no doubt, unfortunately, that that statement might serve, with minor variations, as the story of any one of a quarter of a

million Russian citizens, sentenced to exile in forced labour camps for their political opinions, whom the northern forests have swallowed up during the past few years. Neither the absurdity of propagandist statements that all, or most of, the timber Russia exports is produced by convict labour, nor the attempt on the part of the Soviet Government to hide this running sore by stopping the loading of foreign timber-vessels by convict labour, alters the essential horror and tragedy of the fact that in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics to-day men whose only "crime" is to be suspected of opinions opposed to orthodox Communism, are torn from their families, dispossessed of their belongings, and pass, wave after wave, beyond that barrier of forest which shuts off their prison-houses from the civilised world.

That men—members of formerly recognised revolutionary parties, intellectuals, specialists and *kulaki*—do thus suffer, without trial and without redress, the most terrible privations and brutality, is unfortunately beyond dispute.

Having briefly reviewed the Red Terror in its many forms, let us consider the legal aspects of the present system, as expressed in the class justice of Soviet courts and exemplified by some of the most famous trials conducted in the Soviet Union during the past ten years.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST OF THE GREAT MOSCOW TRIALS

"The fight waged by the Socialist-Revolutionists is but the continuation of the old fight. For there is no substantial difference between an absolutist government which holds its power by heritage or one which is of recent creation. There is no material difference between the rule of a 'legal' Czar and a clique that accidentally established itself in power. There is no difference between a tyrant who lives in a palace and a despot who misused the revolution of workers and peasants to ascend into the Kremlin."

K. KAUTSKY, German Socialist leader.

ON June 8, 1922, there opened in Moscow, before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal, the first of the mass trials of those accused of treason against the Soviet State with which the world has since become so familiar.

In the dock, facing the Soviet judges, stood thirty-two men and women, divided into two groups. The first consisted of twenty-two prominent members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, one of the recognised-Socialist political parties of Russia. The second group of ten defendants comprised the *agents provocateurs* of the Cheka, whose testimony gave the trial what legal "justification" it possessed, and the "turncoats" who had appealed for leniency and asked to be allowed, if acquitted, to join the Communist Party.

The prisoners faced four charges :

1. That the Socialist-Revolutionaries had defended the Provisional Government with arms.
2. That the Socialist-Revolutionaries, with arms in their hands, had defended the Constituent Assembly (the revolutionary parliament, elected by adult suffrage and composed of all Russian parties, which took control after the first Revolution of March, 1917. In this Parliament the largest group was the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and the second largest party the Bolsheviks).
3. That the Socialist-Revolutionaries had waged an armed struggle against the Soviet Government.
4. That the Socialist-Revolutionaries had taken part in the assassination of Volodarsky, and the attempted assassination of Lenin, which had occurred some time before.

There were several facts which contributed to the world interest aroused by this trial. Twelve of the prisoners of the first group, subsequently sentenced to death, had between them a total of 240 years' service to the revolution and the cause of freedom in Russia, and a total record of seventy years' imprisonment or exile under the Czarist régime. Five of them had worn prison chains. Two of them—Gotz and Ivanova—had stood upon the gallows in the

fight for liberty. Two of them had served two terms of hard labour.

The record of these twelve under the Czars was as follows :

Abraham Gotz. Entered the revolutionary movement in 1900. Imprisoned in fortress of Peter and Paul, in expectation of execution. Tried by court-martial and sentenced to eight years' hard labour and exile in Siberia, where he remained until the revolution of 1917 brought release.

Eugene Timofeyeff. Sentenced in 1905 to five years' hard labour, and re-sentenced, shortly before the conclusion of that term, to ten years. Liberated from prison by the revolution.

Gendelmann. Entered revolutionary movement in 1898. In 1901 sent into army as private for participation in student disturbances. Spent three years in Czarist prisons.

Donskoy. Entered revolutionary movement in 1897 ; sent into army as private for participation in student disturbances. Exiled three times ; spent six years in Czarist prisons.

Eugene Ratner. Joined Socialist-Revolutionaries in 1903 ; arrested eight times under Czarist régime ; spent more than six years in Czarist prisons.

Gerstein. Self-educated workman who had participated in revolutionary movement since 1898. Served four and half years in prison and five years in exile under Czar.

Nikolai Ivanoff. Ten years' hard labour. Arrested by Kolchak and escaped death by flight.

Lichatch. Two years in jail and six years in exile in Siberia.

Sergei Morozoff. Member of Party since 1905. Sentenced twice to hard labour ; spent seven years in prison.

Nikolai Artemieff. Entered revolutionary movement in 1903 ; exiled four times, spending part of his exile in Turchansk region of Arctic Russia.

Helen Ivanova. Condemned to death in 1908. Sentence commuted to hard labour for life. Regained her liberty at the revolution.

Vladimir Agapoff. The youngest of the condemned. Entered the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in 1909 ; exiled to Siberia under the Czar.

These were the veteran fighters for Russian liberty who were now arraigned by Soviet justice as the authors of terrorist plots against the Bolshevik régime and enemies of the Russian proletariat.

Their arrest had evoked protests from all the Socialist Parties in Europe, who feared that it was the intention of the Soviet Government, under the guise of a legal trial, to rid themselves at one stroke

of all the leaders of a party which had refused to accept the Bolshevik dictatorship.

The meeting of the three Socialist Internationals then in existence—the Second, the Third, and the “Vienna”—at Berlin in April, 1922, gave friends of the prisoners abroad an opportunity of pressing for guarantees that the death penalty would not be inflicted, whatever the verdict returned by the Soviet judges.

At that time the Communists were keenly desirous of securing a “united front” of all European Socialists against capitalism, and advantage was taken of this to fact wring certain concessions from the Bolshevik delegates. These were recorded in the following agreement, signed by the representatives of the Russian Government:

“This Conference takes note of the declaration of the representatives of the Third International to the effect that all counsel who may be chosen by the accused would be admitted to the trial of the forty-seven Socialist-Revolutionaries; that, as has already been pointed out in the Soviet press prior to the conference, there will be no death sentences imposed at this trial; and that, in view of the public hearing of this trial, representatives of all three Executive Committees (of the Three Internationals) may be present as observers, who will be permitted to take shorthand records for the information of the parties represented by these executive committees.”

This agreement made possible the participation of the European Socialist Parties at the trial and, in accordance with its terms, four prominent foreign Socialists—Vandervelde and Waters of Belgium, and Kurt Rosenfeld and Theodore Liebknecht of the Independent Socialist Party of Germany—left for Moscow in May to assist in the defence as representatives of the Second (Labour and Socialist) International, the international body to which the British Labour Party and the French and German Socialist Parties are affiliated.

It was clear, therefore, from the outset, that a full report of this trial would be available for the people of the world, and that unprejudiced observers would place their opinion of Bolshevik justice upon record for the benefit of the workers of other countries.

The agreement which enabled these foreigners to be present at the trial, and to reinforce the Russian counsel for the defence, was condemned by Lenin himself as an unwise concession.

“In my opinion,” he wrote in the Moscow *Pravda* (April 11, 1922), “our delegates acted improperly when they agreed to accept the following conditions: (1) that the Soviet Government will not pass a single death verdict in the case of the forty-seven Socialist-Revolutionaries;¹ and (2) that representatives of the three Internationals would be permitted to be present at the trial. These conditions represent nothing else than a political concession. . . .”

¹ After the Berlin Conference this number was reduced to thirty-three.

Despite this rebuke, the Soviet Government agreed to stand by the agreement and admit the foreign counsel. But that the task facing the representatives of European Socialism was not going to be easy was clearly shown by the campaign of vilification and abuse against them which was promptly unloosed in the Soviet press. Thus, the *Pravda* launched, in a leading article, the following attack :

“ The Second International has transmitted a communication demanding the admission of ten social traitors, lackeys of the *bourgeoisie*, as counsel for the Socialist-Revolutionary incendiaries and murderers. Among these fellows is a former *bourgeois* minister of France and three Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries, who are themselves guilty of the treachery and crimes of their party colleagues. The very list itself is a monument of brazenness. . . . Proletarian Russia has succeeded in crushing her foes but she is not yet secure against possible treacherous blows from the rear. And if the Second International ventures to send here its ‘favourites,’ permitting them to make use of its trade-mark, it must expect a corresponding welcome for them on our part. By the Berlin agreement we have agreed to admit freely-chosen counsel for the court trial. We will carry out this obligation to the letter. But so far as the situation outside the limits of the court is concerned, these gentlemen must be so treated as to protect our country against their espionage and the incendiary tactics of these rascals, who on one hand engage in the murder of labour’s leaders, and, on the other, are too cowardly to admit it.”

This sort of statement did not make the task of the foreign counsel any easier, but it did at least admit the validity of the Berlin agreement, by which it was hoped that a fair trial had been assured.

The trial was the culmination of a campaign of deliberate persecution waged against all non-Communist elements in Russia. As M. Voitinsky, the well-known Social-Democratic politician and economist (now a Professor in Germany), has written : “ The basic idea of Bolshevism is the dictatorship of the minority over the majority, of the party over the working-class and the people. This idea determined and defined the life road of the Bolshevik Party. Having started out with the idea of the necessity of its dictatorship in the interest of the revolutionary emancipation of the toiling masses, the Bolshevik Party arrived at the point inevitable for any dictatorship—to despotism, to merciless suppression of all self-reliance and independent activity of the people, to the denial of all principle for the sake of the naked preservation of its power. Thus a Government which has come into power in the course of the revolution and has preserved all superficial attributes of revolutionary substance has in reality revived all the despotic methods of Czarism and has destroyed all the conquests of the revolution.

"There is no greater danger for the Bolshevik Government than the awakening of class-consciousness and independent activity of the masses of workers and peasants, for once the masses realise their interests and their power they will inevitably seek to take power into their own hands and will hurl their absolutist rulers—no matter under what flag they may be sailing—off their necks."

Here is the source of Bolshevik hatred of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, the leaders of which stood for the principles of democracy and popular rule amid the rising Communist tide, and who had consistently refused to give any guarantee that they would cease their attempts to overthrow Communism by peaceful means and restore democracy to Russia.

If the Mensheviks were anathema to the Russian Government, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, appealing for the support of the peasants, were regarded as the greater enemy.

The persecution of those who had struggled for liberty in Russia—men and women who had left Czarist prisons only to be re-arrested and placed in Cheka prisons—is the saddest fact about those early days of Soviet rule, which saw the "shooting up" of a workers' demonstration at Petrograd, called to defend the Constituent Assembly created by the overthrown Provisional Government; the mass slaughter at Astrachan, when thousands of workers were shot down or drowned in the Volga; the bombardment of Elisavetpol, when 20,000 Mussulmen, the vast majority of them workers and peasants, were murdered, and the long casualty lists of workers and Socialists shot and arrested in the cities of Russia.

The mere shooting, without trial, of the leaders of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party would not, however, have achieved the real aim of the Government, which was to secure their "moral annihilation" by destroying their character and prestige in open court, before the whole public opinion of Russia. It was this consideration which had made them so eager to secure the "evidence" supplied by their two *agents provocateurs* and which dominated every phase of the trial.

The two men who thus supplied the one real charge against the principal prisoners—the evidence of complicity in the assassination of Volodarsky, and the attempted assassination of Lenin—were Semionoff-Vassiliev and Konopliowa.

Semionoff had joined the Socialist-Revolutionaries after the revolution, at a time when members were flooding into that organisation, and it was impossible to scrutinise carefully the *bona fides* of all who called themselves Socialists.

Before the end of 1917 he came into conflict with the leaders of the party because of his demand that terrorist actions should be taken against the Bolshevik leaders, in defiance of the considered policy of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

Later, this man and Konopliowa organised an independent fighting

brigade composed of workmen and youths, and in the name of this group (self-styled) of the party, he once more suggested the organisation of a terrorist campaign against Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders, a suggestion which the central committee of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party once more rejected.

Despite this failure to win party approval for his policy, however, a member of the Semionoff group, named Sergeyeff, killed the Communist official Volodarsky on meeting him accidentally in the street. This crime was publicly disavowed by the party and Semionoff was severely censured, being informed that he deserved the severest punishment for breaking the party discipline. For, while the Socialist-Revolutionary Party was opposed to the policy of the Bolsheviks, and agitated against them, its leaders refused to countenance the weapon of assassination. Unfortunately, the party could not easily get rid of a man who insisted on calling himself by its name, and who persisted, moreover, in organising further acts of terrorism without the sanction of the party. In doing so, he deceived his own group, informing them that he acted with the approval of the central committee of the party.

Eventually, in the summer of 1918, when the civil war was at its height, Semionoff was arrested and placed in the Lubyanka prison. While there he shot at a guard in an attempt to escape. He was recaptured and faced with the prospect of certain execution. Thereupon he sent to Lenin a plea for pardon, and got into communication with Dzjerzinsky, head of the Cheka. Shortly afterwards he was released. He left the prison a member of the Communist Party, entrusted with a special task—to return to the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, and to work within it as an *agent provocateur*.

He was only one of many such agents, for even at that date the Bolsheviks had succeeded in establishing a service of spies which eclipsed all the achievements in that direction of the Czarist authorities, but his was the testimony on which the trial of the Socialist-Revolutionary leaders was based.

These leaders were arrested some months before the trial, and held as hostages, to be executed immediately if any attempt were made to assassinate members of the Soviet Government. This action the Cheka justified by declaring that they held a "sincere confession" (obtained from this same *agent provocateur*) proving that the Socialist-Revolutionists had been plotting with Savinkov, the reactionary opponent of the Bolsheviks,¹ to murder the leaders of the Communist Party. It was against this decision to hold Socialist-Revolutionary leaders as hostages that Prince Kropotkin protested in the letter quoted in an earlier chapter.

This report failed to impress the people of Russia. They knew of Savinkov's activities outside Russia, and they knew the arrested leaders, and the suggestion of collaboration between them was too

¹ See Chapter IX.

ludicrous to achieve its object—the destruction of the authority of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

In February, 1922, the Soviet Government arranged with its own agent, Semionoff, to produce a pamphlet setting out the alleged crimes and attempted crimes of the imprisoned leaders, and it was announced that they would be brought to the bar of justice and tried for their lives.

I have, unfortunately, no space here to reproduce in full the amazing document produced by the Soviet's *agent provocateur*.

I say unfortunately, for this pamphlet, on which the trial that followed was largely based, has served as a pattern for all the "indictments" prepared by the Russian authorities against "*saboteurs*," "counter-revolutionaries" and other enemies from that day to this. An indictment such as has never been seen in any court of law in the world outside the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

Allegations of murders, attempted murders, and other crimes follow one another breathlessly in its pages. In all, no fewer than ninety-three persons were incriminated in that one document!

But, if the document was long, the purport of it has been summarised by M. Vandervelde, the leading foreign counsel at the trial, in a few words:

"Semionoff's entire accusation rests upon the allegation that the assassination plots he carried out were undertaken with the approval of the Central Committee (of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party), each of which, however, was regularly disavowed by the Committee. Nevertheless, he continued engineering his plots, and the party continued to disavow them, while he, despite this conduct of the Central Committee, persisted in manufacturing new assassination plots. Is this likely? It is quite clear that all this is pure invention on the part of Semionoff, concocted long after, in co-operation with those who inspired him."

And Vandervelde's conclusion was that no normal Court would accept such testimony—resting upon the unsupported word of a proved traitor—for an instant.

Thus matters rested when, on June 8, 1922, the trial opened, to the usual accompaniment of mass demonstrations, press abuse and public agitation, manufactured by propaganda and compulsion, against both the prisoners and the foreign counsel who had come to assist in their defence.

These signs of popular wrath were well staged for their purpose—the complete discrediting of the accused as a preliminary to their judicial murder. One incident from a mass of evidence on the subject will suffice to show the atmosphere in which the trial opened, an atmosphere unprecedented outside Russia.

When the representatives of the non-Communist Internationals arrived at the Windau Station at Moscow, M. Vandervelde stepped

from the train to find confronting him a banner depicting himself standing beside the King of the Belgians and bearing the inscription : " Mr. Royal Minister Vandervelde, when will you be brought to trial before a revolutionary tribunal ? "

A choir of singers welcomed the foreigners with a special song, prepared for the occasion, and full of insults against Vandervelde and his companions. And behind the choir was massed the public, shouting threats against the " social traitors " who had come to defend " murderers."

The demonstrations demanding " Proletarian justice " against the accused culminated in a " great mass demonstration " which filled the Red Square at Moscow on June 20, while the trial was still proceeding—a demonstration which will be referred to again. No counter-demonstrations in favour of the accused were permitted, neither could any of those who supported the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and its policy speak or write in defence of their beliefs, or, indeed, make their beliefs known.

The trial began with a statement by the ten Communists who had undertaken the defence of the second group of prisoners—Semionoff and his fellow-spy and those who had recanted to save their lives. The counsel defending these men declared :

" Counsel for the defence, as a body, do not regard themselves in agreement. We have nothing in common with Messrs. Vandervelde and Rosenfeld. We do not regard it possible for us to defend the enemies of the proletarian revolution, who belong to the camp of the Russian *Vendée*. But among the accused there is a group who admit their participation in counter-revolutionary work and who have come to the conclusion that the policy of the Central Committee of the party of Socialist-Revolutionaries was a criminal one. These persons have honestly joined the camp of the proletarian revolution. On this ground we consider it our revolutionary duty to undertake their defence."

The tribunal was composed of three Bolsheviks. The " public " was represented at the trial by 1,200 people, mostly Communists. Only twenty-two cards of admission were allotted to the families of the accused. The shorthand notes of the evidence were, despite the guarantee given by the Berlin agreement, entirely in the hands of the Cheka.

The trial early resolved itself into the prosecution, not of thirty-three prisoners, but of the first group, composed of twenty-two members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party who were the real prisoners and who had refused to recant to save their lives.

These twenty-two prisoners had to face four groups of accusers—the official prosecutors, led by Krylenko ; the traitors in the second group of prisoners ; the counsel for these men, and the Court itself.

From the very first day of the trial, the counsel for the first group,

both foreign and Russian, found it difficult to conduct the defence under the conditions imposed upon them.

They were frequently forbidden to speak; were interrupted by the judges and prosecuting counsel; their speeches were so badly recorded, or garbled, by the official Cheka shorthand writers that they could not recognise their own words. They were denied the right of preliminary examination of the details of the charges. The foreign members were refused the right to confer with their Russian colleagues. Moreover, the tribunal declined to hear the witnesses called for the defence and refused to permit the admission of documents which exposed the absurdity of the charges.

This bias against the prisoners will not surprise those who have read the extracts from, and interpretations of, the Soviet legal code and judicial methods set out in an earlier chapter. That the Soviet authorities were not concerned with arranging an unprejudiced hearing was, indeed, admitted at the first session of the Court, when Piatakoff, the presiding judge, announced that "the Court does not intend to handle the case from a dispassionate objective point of view but would be guided solely by the interests of the Soviet Government."

In short, the trial of the Socialist-Revolutionaries was no trial, as that word is understood in Western countries. It was staged simply and solely as the necessary preliminary to striking a mortal wound at political opponents who were innocent of any crime.

When the Court refused to admit four Russian lawyers chosen for the defence, the prisoners' advisers pointed to the provisions of the Berlin agreement. Whereupon the Soviet Government declared that the agreement was not binding, and their Court would do as it pleased.

After seven days of obstruction and calumny, the foreign Socialists who had gone to Moscow to assist in the defence of the twenty-two Socialist-Revolutionist leaders filed the following protest against the methods by which the trial was being conducted:

1. The Court has declined to admit four new attorneys for the defence and, contrary to the Berlin agreement, it has forbidden us to take shorthand records.
2. The Court has declared that, under certain circumstances, it would even question the desirability of permitting foreign counsel to continue their participation in the trial.
3. Prosecutors Krylenko and Lunacharsky have declared that the Berlin agreement was in no way binding upon them.
4. The representative of the delegation of the Third International at the Berlin Conference, Bucharin, has declared that the Berlin agreement is abrogated.

The foreign representatives thereupon threw in their briefs and withdrew from the trial—a decision unanimously approved by the



KRYLENKO, STATE PROSECUTOR OF THE U.S.S.R.
Addresses the Supreme Court of Soviet Russia during a trial of "saboteurs."

defendants—realising that their continued presence created the illusion that the trial was proceeding normally, whereas the conditions under which “justice” was being administered were very far from normal.

On June 19, Vandervelde, Liebknecht, Rosenfeld and Waters left Moscow, after they had carried out a 24-hour hunger strike to compel the Bolsheviks to supply them with the necessary exit *visas* to leave Russia.

Upon their return to Berlin, the foreign Socialists’ delegation issued a manifesto explaining their action and addressed to the Socialist parties of the world, from which I quote the following extracts :

“The manner in which the trial is conducted has failed to satisfy our expectations. From the very beginning it became obvious that contrary to the promises made by the Third (Communist) International in Berlin, the accused were brought not before their judges but before their political foes, whose purpose it was to convict them for reasons and considerations of State. Particularly significant was the declaration of the president, immediately upon the opening of the trial, that this Court was a class Court and that it would consciously administer class justice.

“The president of the Supreme Tribunal, Krylenko, appeared before the presiding officer, who is actually subordinate to him, in the rôle of prosecutor, contrary to Krylenko’s own recent ruling forbidding, for obvious reasons, the appearance of a court president before his own Court in the capacity of prosecutor. In his own place Krylenko appointed Piatakoff, his wife’s brother-in-law and subordinate. Krylenko’s wife herself conducted the preliminary enquiry and signed the indictment. Before the opening of the trial, Krylenko personally proposed resolutions at public meetings demanding conviction of the accused.”

The manifesto ended with the exhortation : “The interests of the whole working-class now demand that you halt the hands of those who are thirsting for the blood of the accused. The slogan of all working-class parties of all lands must be ‘No death sentences for the accused Socialist-Revolutionaries’.”

On June 20, the anniversary of Volodarsky’s murder and the day following the departure of the foreign Socialist leaders, there took place at Moscow the mass demonstration, already referred to, of workers and public “to demand the death penalty.”

The Red Army was paraded in review order and workers in the factories and Government employees were ordered to attend. According to a report afterwards issued by the members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in exile, it was announced officially that all those who participated in the demonstration would be paid their day’s wages without deduction. It was also hinted that severe penalties

would await those who absented themselves without reasonable excuse.

The focus of all the processions of "loyal" workers was the Red Square, where the three Soviet judges who were trying the case, and Krylenko, the prosecutor-general, were waiting on a dais, draped in red, to receive their cheers.

A journalist, who at that time represented a British newspaper at Moscow and who was present at all sessions of the trial, applied to the Soviet Foreign Office for a permit to be present in the square. He was informed that no permit was necessary.

The demonstration was timed for four o'clock in the afternoon, but when he made his way to the square at 2 p.m. he found a line of Red troops blocking the entry, and was informed that no one could be admitted, apart from the demonstrators, without a permit. And by that time, he knew, it was too late to argue the matter out with officialdom.

Instead, he made his way by a roundabout route to the other side of the square, by which the processions were entering, and, pulling his hat well down, he managed to attach himself to a group of workers, and joined in singing the *Internationale*, the Red revolutionary hymn.

The ruse succeeded. He was swept into the square, already thronged with thousands, and there he witnessed a sight which must surely be unique in the history of legal procedure.

On the red-draped platform in the centre of the swarming crowds stood the three judges and the chief prosecutor, waving their hands and cheering the demonstrators who had come there to demand that the accused should be executed!

The speeches were in keeping with the *macabre* scene. Piatakoff, president of the revolutionary tribunal, told the assembled audience that, while he could not anticipate the course of justice, he could say with every assurance that the Court would administer severe punishment upon those who raised their hand against the Soviet State.

Bucharin, who followed, applauded the part played in the affair by Semionoff and Konopliowa, the *agents provocateurs* of the Cheka, in gathering the material on which the charges against the first group of prisoners were based.

The demonstrators having marched past the judges, the latter returned to the court-room, and ordered that the prisoners should be brought to an open window, so that the crowds below might see them. The leading members of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, headed by Gotz, took their place nearest to the crowd. . . . A block of wood, flung from the crowd and bearing the inscription, "Death to the Socialist-Revolutionists" struck Gotz on the head. . . .

So the amazing scene proceeds for five hours. Still the demands of Soviet "justice" remained unsatisfied. At 10 p.m. that night the president of the court allowed a delegation, representing the demonstrators of the afternoon, to appear before the tribunal in court.

A crowd of wild fanatics surged into the court-room, cursing the prisoners and belauding the judges. And the judges listened attentively to their speeches, shook hands with their leaders, and promised to do their best to carry out "the people's will."

All the prisoners were forced to be unwilling spectators of this scene, which lasted until after midnight, but the mental tortures of the accused were probably easier to bear than the tortures inflicted upon the mothers, wives and sisters of the defendants who were in court.

The following morning, Muraviev and the other Russian attorneys acting on behalf of the first group of prisoners, lodged a protest against these events :

"The appearance of the demonstrators in the court-room and the presentation of their resolution to the Court constituted a violation of normal proceedings, determined beforehand the Court's verdict, rendering it illegal, and destroyed the character of the highest judicial organ of the republic by the violation of the technical mode of judicial procedure," they declared. "For these reasons the defence is compelled to request that the trial be discontinued, in order that it may be resumed before a new Court and another body of Government prosecutors."

The judges refused to discontinue the trial, and although the defending lawyers quoted to them the provisions of the Soviet legal code, which provide that, where outsiders are permitted to participate in Court proceedings, the verdict must positively be annulled, whatever the circumstances, the tribunal adhered to its decision.

Whereupon Muraviev, inflamed to anger by this travesty of justice, shouted : "Woe to the country, woe to the people who have no regard for the law, and who laugh at those who defend the law."

In reply, the president of the tribunal ordered Muraviev's arrest for contempt of court !

At this point in the proceedings, the remaining Russian counsel for the defence of the Socialist-Revolutionary leaders conferred with the accused, and then announced that no useful purpose would be served by their continuing to take part in the proceedings. So they withdrew—and the accused faced their Soviet judges alone. (Three of the defending Russian attorneys, including Muraviev, were later sentenced to periods in exile for their attitude during the trial.)

To this practical protest, the three judges replied with a declaration, in which they stated :

"The argument of counsel Muraviev that the Court can render its verdict only if it remains within a glass case can be explained only by the blindness of *bourgeois* thought. Judges are human beings and it is impossible to isolate them from public life. The important thing in this case is not what had actually occurred but

To these insinuations, Gotz replied :

"I deny emphatically the accusations brought against me, as member of the Central Committee, with regard to our sanction of individual acts of terrorism committed against the leaders of our political foes by individual members of our party. I deny the accusation as utterly baseless, unsupported by concrete data and founded entirely upon the statements of former members of our party on their admission to the Communist Party. Such terrorist acts were in sharp contradiction to the policy of the Central Committee."

The attitude of all the accused twenty-two leaders of the first group of prisoners throughout the trial revealed their readiness to sacrifice their lives rather than plead for pardon. Throughout this travesty of justice they faced their accusers with the same nobility of spirit which they had shown in earlier years when facing the Czarist judges.

Their attitude to the whole proceedings was outlined in the opening speech of Gendelmann :

"We do not recognise your court. We do not recognise it, not only because of your crying violations of your own laws, but principally because what we are about to witness here will be a political struggle between the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and the Bolshevik Party, the judges in which will consist, not of any neutral or non-partisan body, or of members of other parties, freely chosen by the people, but of members of that same Bolshevik Party, appointed by its Central Committee, and who come here with a verdict prepared in advance by the Central Committee of the Russian Bolshevik Party."

"What becomes of your promises of a free trial and free defence given at the Berlin Conference of the Internationalists when you prevent the appearance of eleven of our witnesses by keeping them under arrest?" asked another of the accused.

"From the moment when we fell into your hands we were convinced that you would condemn us to death," declared Gendelmann, fearlessly facing his judges. "But from these benches you will never hear any plea for mercy."

"We have not come here to save our heads," stated Timofeyeff, "they belong to the revolution. We will never surrender our right to revolution, for this right is the holy heritage of the French Revolution and the unwritten law of every Socialist Party."

Berg, a workman who was another of the accused, was asked : "Are you guilty?" "Yes," he replied, "I am guilty before the revolution of not fighting hard enough to destroy your rotten dictatorship."

The moment arrived for the accused to make their closing declarations before sentence was passed upon them.

Gotz faced the Court.

"Let my remarks from this platform serve as a testament to those who remain," he said in a calm, unruffled voice. "If we must die we will meet death without fear, but if we remain among the living we will, after our release, continue to wage our fight against you, as we have done in the past."

Timofeyeff followed.

"The State Prosecutors Krylenko and Lunacharsky who pressed the indictment against us on all counts, not being sure themselves of our guilt, have deemed it necessary, in order to lighten their task, to request us to repent and disavow our past activity. I have been delegated by the defendants of the first group to make the following declaration in reply to this proposal: There can be no question of repentance or disavowal. From these benches you will never hear anything like that. As we have stood before, so we will continue to stand in the future, and in this regard we will always remain, so far as you are concerned, unrepentant opponents."

Following this uncompromising declaration, the Court again addressed the principal defendants, asking what their attitude towards the Soviet régime would be if they should be acquitted and given their liberty.

Timofeyeff replied for them all: "We stand to the unalterable position expressed by every one of us individually during the interrogation at the trial."

On August 7, the twenty-two prisoners, who had between them endured seventy years in the prisons of Siberia under the Czars, stood up to receive sentence at the hands of the followers of Lenin. The issue had never been in doubt. Without a sign of any sort they heard the verdicts.

The twelve whose names and records appear at the beginning of this chapter were sentenced to death. Nine further members of the first group were sentenced to imprisonment for from two to ten years.

The second group, including the two *agents provocateurs* and the members of the party who had turned State's evidence to save their own lives, were acquitted.

Thus ended the great "trial" of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

How did those who had striven to save the accused men, or at least to secure for them a fair trial, regard the verdict?

"How heroic do the figures of the accused men and women appear, and how disgusting and pitiful are the pack of hounds who demanded their blood, who hurled insult and humiliation upon

them in their eagerness to persecute them in order that they might revel in their suffering !

" The moral loftiness of the accused and the moral degeneration of their accusers at the trial were so self-evident and convincing, that the whole thing formed a picture of remarkable clarity and produced an indelible impression upon everybody, with the exception of the pack of bloodthirsty hounds hired by the Moscow executioners to defend their miserable case in the European press, and who were low and mean enough to do it.

" The accused Socialist-Revolutionaries saved the honour of Socialism, trampled by the Bolsheviks. The names of Gotz, Timofeyeff and their comrades will be enshrined in the hearts of the workers of the entire world, regardless of party affiliations.

" Never did the Bolsheviks descend to their present low level. Time was when we knew many of them as honest fighters and idealists. But the *coup d'état* of 1917 placed them in a false position, which was bound to lead consistently to their inevitable and ever-growing perversion.

" From the very beginning, they founded their power upon falsehood and violence directed against the proletariat, upon the principle that the end justifies the means. This principle always and inevitably leads to the degeneration of the party applying it, for it perverts the party and paralyses those who do not oppose this perversion."

And again :

" The Moscow trial constituted a desperate effort on the part of the Bolsheviks to discredit their most dangerous opponents at the present moment in the eyes of the Russian and the world proletariat. They sought to represent these opponents as associates of the counter-revolution and thus rehabilitate the prestige of Communism, which has lost the sympathies of the overwhelming majority of the proletariat.

" But the Bolsheviks lost the trial. It is not the accused but the accusers and their hirelings who to-day stand condemned in Russia and throughout the world. This trial, which provoked the deepest universal contempt, revealed even to those who hitherto still failed to see the truth, the utter decay and degeneration of the Bolshevik régime.

" But the Moscow trial is merely one of the episodes incident to the world-wide, historic conflict conducted by Bolshevism. Out of this conflict it will emerge discredited and condemned. A régime like that of the Bolsheviks has already grown rotten-ripe for destruction. It is impossible to foresee yet when and how it will fall, but one thing can be said now and with absolute certainty : Bolshevism will fall in shame and disgrace, bemoaned perhaps only by the speculators of the capitalist world, but accompanied by the

curse of the entire world proletariat struggling for emancipation. That is the lesson and the historic significance of the Moscow trial."

I am quoting not from the words of any "capitalist" or any writer for the "*bourgeois*" press, but from a signed statement on the trial issued shortly after its close by Herr Kautsky, the veteran German Socialist leader. That statement reveals how deeply radicals in no sense favourable to capitalism were stirred by this travesty of justice.

The protests and resolutions condemning the sentences, which choked the wires to Moscow, would fill hundreds of pages of this book. Among those who raised their voice in protest, and who cannot be suspected of "*bourgeois* tendencies" were the British Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party, the French Socialist Party—indeed, all the Socialist parties of Europe—and such well-known representatives of science, art and literature as Einstein, H. G. Wells, Paul Painlevé and Count Harry Kessler.

Even men of known Communist sympathies warned the Soviet Government that the verdicts would leave Russia isolated in the face of a united world opinion. Among them were Maxim Gorky, Anatole France, Henri Barbusse, Romain Rolland and Malatesta, the veteran Italian anarchist leader.

While this spontaneous outburst of indignation continued, the verdict was "reviewed" by a conference of the Bolshevik Party, then in session at Moscow, and it became known that there were two opinions within the party regarding the sentences. Most of the Soviet leaders (with the exception of Trotsky) and many delegates from the provinces, favoured the substitution of a sentence of permanent exile abroad for the death penalty. Trotsky, Stalin and Bucharin, on the other hand, demanded that the condemned men and women should be given twenty-four hours in which to sign a declaration abandoning for ever all activities against the Russian Government, the alternative being the immediate carrying out of the death sentences.

Eventually a "cat and mouse" compromise was adopted and made public in the following announcement:

"With regard to those twelve of the defendants sentenced to the extreme measure of punishment, the Central Executive Committee decides: the verdict is confirmed but its execution is postponed.

"The verdict will not be executed if the Socialist-Revolutionary Party abandons all underground terrorist and rebel activities as well as all military espionage against the Soviet Government.

"If, however, the Socialist-Revolutionary Party continues in the future to wage armed war against the Soviet Government, it will inevitably bring about the execution of all the condemned inspirers and organisers of counter-revolutionary terrorism and rebellion."

As the Soviet State instituted itself the judge of whether the Socialist-Revolutionary Party was, or was not, conspiring against them, this decision meant that the condemned might be called upon to die at any time.

While the twelve were transferred to the *Sekretki* or "inner prison" of the Cheka, their relatives outside were being persecuted and arrested, among them the wives of Lichatch, Gerstein, Liberoff and others.

So the curtain was rung down on the victims of this "trial." They disappeared from off the world stage into the vaults of the Cheka. Their names dropped out of the newspapers, and though the Socialist parties of Europe continued to strive for their release, in those dungeons they remained, until, some time later, they were quietly banished to spend the remainder of their days in exile.

That no favours were granted to them during the years they spent in prison—some were imprisoned for four years before being "released" and sent into exile—is shown by the fact that during 1925 and 1926 Gotz, Timofeyeff and others sentenced with them went on hunger-strike on several occasions for over two weeks to bring pressure to bear upon their captors to improve their conditions.

When, in April, 1926, the British Labour Party asked the Russian Government for information concerning the subsequent fate of the Socialist-Revolutionary leaders, Rotengoltz, then *Chargé d'Affaires* at the Soviet Embassy in London, replied: "Nine of the eleven (*sic*) have been liberated long ago and enjoy complete freedom of movement within certain prescribed areas in which they have been permitted to reside. The other two, *viz.* Messieurs Gotz and Timofeyeff, are under arrest, but they are not in prison. Monsieur Gotz is living in a private house, while Monsieur Timofeyeff is under treatment in a hospital."

"Certain prescribed areas in which they are permitted to reside," is a diplomatic euphemism which is in keeping with enforced exile, but is in direct contradiction to the statement that they have "complete freedom of movement."

Even to-day, nine years after they were sentenced, the survivors of this band do not enjoy "complete freedom." It is difficult, for obvious reasons, to secure any information concerning the conditions of political prisoners of the Soviets, but I have succeeded in tracing some of the members of the group and their history, during the years since the public last heard of them, is as follows:

Sergei Morozoff committed suicide in prison in 1924. He took his life as a protest against his prolonged detention and the conditions under which he was being held. He was so determined not to be saved by being taken to the prison hospital that he concealed all evidence of his action from the guards until it was too late to save his life (so a fellow-Socialist in the same prison managed to inform a friend outside Russia). Morozoff was a lifelong Socialist and, when

exiled to Siberia under the Czarist régime, he founded a collective farm among the exiles of his district, working on it himself as an ordinary labourer.

Gotz is in exile at Penza, under strict police surveillance. He is working as a junior assistant in the office of the town Soviet, and his health is poor.

Timofeyeff is in exile at Kazan. As a result of long imprisonment and bad treatment, he is in poor health and almost blind. He was continuously in prison from 1919 until 1925.

Gendelmann is in exile at Vologda, North Russia. He was refused permission to be a member of a trade union on political grounds, and is therefore without any possibility of securing work. Information which reached me a few months ago made it clear that he was then on the point of starvation and in danger of a mental breakdown. News of his plight reached friends outside Russia who wished to render help but realised the dangers of attempting to communicate with him. It was eventually arranged that a voluntary society in the United States should send him a parcel of food, accompanied by a letter indicating that no news of his condition had reached them. The parcel was confiscated by the Russian authorities and Gendelmann was deprived of his food cards as "punishment" for communicating with those outside Russia. He was thus unable to secure any rationed foods whatever.

Donskoy is living in exile at Surgit, Western Siberia. He is now almost blind, as a result of inflammation of the brain. Donskoy was a doctor in civil life and, having been banished to a district where there was no medical man or medicine for a thousand miles around, he began to practise, taking no fees for his services, but only five kopecks from each patient in order to provide funds for the purchase of medicine.

The local administration, fearing the popularity of this educated man, forbade him to continue this work. Donskoy appealed to Semashko, Soviet Commissar of Health, whom he had known in other days, explaining the position and requesting official permission to continue his work.

Semashko sent the necessary permission but, despite this order from Moscow, the local authorities again intervened. Further appeals being made to Moscow, the local Soviet was ordered to withdraw its opposition and medicines were sent to Donskoy. He has now established a first-aid post, built a house with rooms for patients, and is one of the best-beloved men in the district.

Mrs. Eugene Ratner is in exile at Tashkent, Turkestan "in most difficult circumstances." She is constantly ordered from one small town to another and, owing to these removals, is unable to earn her living.

Nikolai Ivanoff and his sister, Helen Ivanova, were companions. He is now exiled at Tashkent and "in a very bad plight."

Lichatch is also living in exile at Tashkent.¹

There the pitiful story ends. The twelve who were to die have been offered up as human sacrifices to the revolution for which they suffered the torments of the Czarist prison cells.

Their party is no more. The world has turned to other things. But their martyrdom continues.

¹ Since writing this chapter news has reached me that all the surviving prisoners, with the exception of Gotz, have been transferred to Moscow, where they are lodged in a G.P.U. prison, undergoing "special treatment" preparatory to their appearance as witnesses in the trial of Kondratieff and the leaders of the "Peasant Party."

CHAPTER V

THE FIGHT FOR THE RUSSIAN SOUL

"Soviet legislation assures complete religious freedom, and there has been no persecution of anyone for his religious beliefs. No minister of religion has been prosecuted on account of his having performed religious rites."

Statement made by Rykoff, President of the Council of People's Commissars, February, 1930.

No phase of Soviet policy has been the subject of more charges and denials than the attitude of the Russian Government to religion. Sweeping accusations of wholesale religious persecution have called forth equally sweeping claims that, at all times, the Russian people have remained free to worship their God without interference.

"Remembering the oppressive rule played by the Church under the Czar, the people of the Soviet make no secret of their dislike of religion, but every visitor to the Soviet Union knows that we fight religion by education and propaganda and not by the methods of the mediæval Inquisition.

"To this day tens of thousands of churches of all denominations function in the U.S.S.R. and priests who refrain from counter-revolutionary activities are allowed to conduct religious services unmolested. If the churches in the U.S.S.R. are closed it only shows they are becoming less popular with the public. Even in England many churches have been closed as being superfluous."

So runs an official statement made by a "high Bolshevik official" at Moscow on February 10, 1930.

But in Russia, as everyone who has studied Soviet legislation knows, the reality is often hard to reconcile with the intentions of the Government as set out on paper. Let us, therefore, examine this profession of religious freedom in the light, not of theories, but of events.

Up to 1905, there was no religious liberty in Russia. It was, until that year, a crime punishable by law for a Russian citizen to leave the Orthodox Church. Colonies of the descendants of those exiled for life for changing their faith still exist in Siberia and other remote parts of Russia. The persistent and terrible persecution to which Jews were subjected under the Czarist régime is too well known to need comment.

In 1905, at a time when the absolutist rulers of Russia were seriously perturbed by the growing discontent expressed in the attempted revolution of that year, the Czar issued a decree permitting Russians to change their faith, but any Protestant clergyman who invited a Russian to do so remained liable to heavy punishment. Until the overthrow of the Czarist régime in 1917, the Russian Church remained a political appendage of absolutism—a "toll gate on the road to Heaven, collecting its wealth from the poor with threats of eternal damnation," as one English writer has said.

With the advent of the Provisional Government in March, 1917, the best elements of the Russian Church resolved to break away from

the shackles of the State and gain independence, and in November, 1917, the Council of the Orthodox Church revived the high office of Patriarch, electing as the first leader of the new democratic régime Bishop Tikhon, a deeply religious and beloved priest. One of Tikhon's first actions was to issue a protest against the excesses of the Bolsheviks during the civil war then proceeding between that party and the supporters of the Kerensky Government—an action which, whether justified or not, was to cost him dear when the Communists came to power.

Lenin's hatred and contempt for all forms of faith, expressed in the phrase still quoted daily in Russia—"Religion is opium for the people"—was well known and, considering the part which the Russian Church had taken in the fight against liberty in that country, quite understandable. The Soviet régime had been in power only three months when, on February 5, 1918, a decree was issued by the Council of People's Commissars "concerning the separation of the Church from the State and the schools from the Church," which was the first shot in the anti-religious activities henceforth to become an integral part of Soviet policy.

Under this decree, the Church was separated from the State. Other clauses were :

"Each citizen is free to profess any or no religion. Forfeiture of civil rights as the result of professing any or no religion is abolished.

"The actions of Government or other public bodies shall not be accompanied by any religious services or ceremonies.

"Freedom to fulfil religious duties of any kind shall be allowed so long as they do not interfere with public order and do not involve an encroachment upon the rights of citizens of the Soviet Republic. If they do so, local authorities may take all necessary measures to secure public order and safety.

"No person may evade his duties as a citizen on the ground of religious convictions.

"The schools are separated from the Church.

"Religious teaching is prohibited in all State, public and private educational establishments where a general education is given. Citizens may teach and be taught privately.¹

"Compulsory collections and levies in favour of churches or religious societies, the use of measures of compulsion and the infliction of punishment by these societies upon their members is prohibited.

"Churches and religious societies may not own property.

"All property belonging to churches and religious societies

¹ Since January, 1924, it has been forbidden for any minister of religion to give religious teaching to more than two or three persons under the age of eighteen. This prevents the holding of Sunday Schools, Bible classes, or any gatherings designed to teach the children of Christians the faith of their parents.

existing in Russia is declared to be the property of the people. Buildings and objects which are intended specially for religious worship shall be handed over by special decisions of local or central authorities for the free use of the religious societies concerned."

At that date the Soviet Government was too occupied in other directions to provoke an open break with the Church. And had the Communists accepted the standard of ethics and practice common to other countries, the carrying out of these provisions need have occasioned no such extension of the Terror as actually occurred. Naturally, the Church communities disliked having to hand over the accumulated treasures of centuries, but, as events were to show, even this sacrifice might have been peacefully accomplished had the desire for a peaceful solution existed. But the Soviet Government was biased, and its ideas concerning what constituted "counter-revolutionary" activity conflicted with the code of Christian ethics of which the Church was the guardian. The innocent wording of that decree proved later to contain the seeds of martyrdom for thousands of bishops, priests and laymen.

Following the passing of this decree, the Government began to confiscate the great monasteries and their treasures. While the Church hoped that an open break with the new power might be avoided, individual priests, as was only to be expected when confronted with a demand for the surrender of all their property, attempted to inflame public opinion against the Government. Cases arose in which ministers of religion were shot for concealing arms and ammunition upon Church property. And these cases, relatively few in number, provided some show of justification for the wholesale offensive against religion which dates from 1922.

In that year the famine in the Volga region and other districts—one of the most terrible events in recent history—provided the Soviet Government with the excuse for which they had been waiting to destroy the privileged position of the Church once and for all. Already no member of the Communist Party was allowed to take part in any religious ceremony. Already propaganda had been pumped out for months holding up the Church and its riches to ridicule and contempt. Already Bible study circles and even sewing meetings were forbidden by law and priests were prohibited from preaching outside their own parish.

Now orders were issued for the forcible confiscation of all Church treasures throughout Russia for the relief of the famine-stricken. That instruction marked the beginning of the large scale general offensive against the Church in Russia, and was followed by the trial, imprisonment and exile of thousands of Churchmen who attempted to make conditions before surrendering Church property.

An account of the methods by which the Soviet Government used

this order to shatter the unity of the Church and to sweep away many of its leading and most revered figures, will be given in the next chapter.

Any and every attempt on the part of a priest to "hamper" the authorities in carrying out the decree of confiscation was punished under Article 59 of the Soviet Criminal Code, which lays it down that "propaganda or agitation intended to arouse national or religious enmity or differences" shall be punishable with imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years.

Following the confiscation of Church property, and the trials and arrests which accompanied the carrying out of that measure, it became increasingly clear that the antagonism of the Government to religion was not to be satisfied by stripping the Church of its possessions, or even by fostering the split which had developed, and the setting up of a new "Living Church" in opposition to the Orthodox Church. The order had gone forth that there must be no other God but Lenin, and continuous systematic pressure began, aimed at the total destruction of religious belief within the Soviet Union.

Exaggerated statements have been made concerning the events which followed on the heels of this policy. "Persecution" has been alleged where, in fact, no persecution, properly so-called, exists. Events arising out of the confessed anti-religious bias of the Communist Government form no part of this record. Anti-religious Governments have been in power before, and it is not surprising that men who had suffered from boyhood from the tyranny and superstition of the Russian Orthodox Church should desire to free the people from its bonds. It would have been more surprising had the revolutionaries not sought to curb the power of the ecclesiastics.

Nor need one assume that those who inaugurated this campaign against religion were actuated by any but sincere motives. They permitted adult citizens to attend public worship freely, and in doing this they considered that they had granted to the churches all the "freedom" they had any right to demand. When I crossed the Soviet Union, at the height of the religious controversy, I found the majority of the churches still open, and I attended services at which the congregations numbered hundreds, drawn from all classes.

The real tragedy of the anti-religious campaign in Russia arises from the fact that, in the main, both Church and State were perfectly sincere in the attitude which drew them inexorably into conflict.

A young workman, dissatisfied with conditions under Communism, criticises that creed. The creed is sacred and must not be criticised. He is therefore arrested and either shot or sent into exile, according to the pleasure of the G.P.U. His mother goes to the priest, who has known the boy all his life, and tells him what has happened. And the priest, justly indignant as a Christian at the thought of any man being punished for his opinions, criticises the Government under which such things are possible.

Whereupon the priest is arrested and heavily punished for "counter-revolutionary" activity.

It all depends upon the viewpoint. The priest, as a Christian, could not suffer such an act of tyranny in silence. To be true to his vows, he must protest. But the Soviet official, who sentenced him by administrative order, must defend the State from criticism if he is to be true to his vow of loyalty to the régime. As long as Communism is in control and the present complete denial of freedom of conscience and speech in Russia persists, that impasse must remain, and those who are true to the old standard of ethics must suffer.

For the Church is striving to remain true to a conception of right and wrong which is no longer recognised by the State. The Communists judge every action, not in the light of the Sermon on the Mount, but according to whether it supports or opposes the maintenance of the existing régime.

A priest visits a province away from his own district. Finding no church open there, he holds a religious service at the request of the peasants. But in Russia it is a crime for a priest to conduct any religious service outside his own parish. Wherefore a dozen peasants are shot, and a hundred others exiled, including those who gave the priest board and lodging during his stay with them.¹ And the official who sentences these "criminals" is only doing his duty. It is the law which is to blame.

A workman may conscientiously object to performing work on Sundays. But under the five-day week now enforced in Russia, no provision is made for a worker to be free on the same day in each week. Therefore the Christian worker must either accept the new calendar or abandon all hope of promotion or becoming a member of the ruling party and run the risk of being labelled a "counter-revolutionary" or, almost as bad, a victim of "*bourgeois* ideology."

It is not so simple, therefore, to "refrain from counter-revolutionary activities." To do so, a priest must refrain from uttering the lightest criticism of any action taken or any decree issued by the Government. He must stand silent while thousands of men and women, innocent of any crime, as Western Europe understands that word, are arrested, imprisoned, exiled and shot.

For, if he questions the fairness and impartiality of class justice, he comes at once within the law which prohibits "propaganda or agitation calling for the overthrow, undermining or weakening of the Soviet power, or calling for the commission of counter-revolutionary crimes," and may be sentenced to anything from six months' solitary confinement to death for not minding his own business. In Russia one is given the alternative of supporting the régime or remaining silent. There is no other.

Even if he stands scrupulously, or unscrupulously, aside, and remains a mere spectator, who may not comfort his congregation no

¹ The Times, August 1, 1930.

matter what penalties are inflicted upon them, it is probable that his church will be taken from him in time and he will be driven out, without any rights of citizenship, the member of an outcast class, to fend for himself and his family as best he may in a land where authority despises him.

For it is the declared aim of the Communist régime to eradicate all forms of religious belief from the U.S.S.R. and by propaganda and "education" to convert their land into a "Godless State." This total suppression of religion would, it was hoped, be achieved by the "normal" methods by which churches are closed as "surplus to requirements"—by a majority vote of the population or by the inability of the churches to pay the taxes levied upon them, or to keep their building in repair.

During recent months there has been a certain "falling off" in the results achieved on the "ante-God front." But if the total abolition of religious belief is not yet within sight, considerable "successes" have been attained, as may be judged by the official figures, showing that over 2000 churches had been closed up to the beginning of 1930. Two thousand churches are not many out of the 40,000 that existed in Russia at the time of the revolution, but it is a beginning, and the number grows every month.

These "successes" in the campaign against religion have been achieved in various ways, not always by direct, violent action. The lessons of the great trials of Churchmen which occurred in 1922 and 1923 showed the Government a better method than that.

The weapon most frequently employed is the decree which provides that, if a majority of citizens in any district vote in favour of the closing of a church, that church is closed. If no other facilities exist for worship, the religious community may appeal against the decision, but the whole weight of authority will be strongly against them.

Thus, in Russia, the majority has the right to interfere in matters of conscience. And, after twelve years of anti-God propaganda, and with clear evidence that it pays to be on the side of Communism, who will blame the young workers if they vote to close the churches?

A frequent method employed in the villages is for an official from Moscow to tell the inhabitants: "You ought to have a club and cinema here, so that you can see the latest Russian and American films and have some entertainment. But, unfortunately, there is no suitable building except the church. I don't want to influence you one way or the other—but it's a pity you have not got a cinema."

A demand is made for a vote. The young, many of them reared in Soviet schools where God is spoken of only with a sneer, out-vote the old. The church is closed, its crosses cut off and replaced by red flags, and the films come. In many parts of Russia I have seen churches closed by this method.

In the cities it is even simpler to secure the closing of a church

without any infringement of the law or any resort to "direct action." The magnificent churches are expensive to maintain in repair. With all Church funds confiscated and a decree forbidding the issue of any appeal for money outside the ranks of the congregation—and with that congregation reduced to the poverty line—it is natural that many of these buildings need attention badly. Along comes the Soviet surveyor, who declares that the foundations of the building need repair. It will cost maybe two thousand roubles. Can the congregation pay? If not, the church must be closed as an unsafe structure. Perfectly legitimate and justifiable—on paper. In practice, the Soviet decrees now in existence make it impossible for any religious congregation to hold out for long.

In other cases, a "mistake" has been discovered in the assessment of taxes made upon a religious building. A demand is made to the priest for the immediate payment of the sum involved, which is now overdue. If the money is raised, there is no guarantee whatever that another "mistake" will not be discovered a month later. And if the money is raised again, the G.P.U. begin to visit the homes of the congregation to discover where this hoarded wealth is coming from. The congregation knows this—knows, too, that no appeal to public opinion is possible, for the only opinion which dares to express itself is against them—so they capitulate at the first shot, and another Altar of God disappears from the face of Russia.

Any priest who protests against these methods is "obstructing the carrying out of Soviet decrees" and liable to be sent into exile. Hundreds are to-day working in the timber camps of the north for criticising the use of methods such as I have described.

The existence of discontent due to this form of anti-religious activity was tacitly admitted by the issue of a circular dealing with church taxation sent by the Commissar for Finance to Financial Commissariats of Allied Republics within the Soviet Union, No. 195, dated January 5, 1930.

"Questions having arisen in various places regarding the taxation of religious societies and the special premises (churches, mosques, synagogues, etc.) at their disposal free of cost, the U.S.S.R. People's Commissariat for Finance, together with the organs concerned, considers it necessary to issue the following instructions :

"1. Premises at the disposal of religious societies, free of cost, come under local building-taxation, both in urban and village districts, on general grounds according to the rates established in the given Allied Republic for the taxation of such buildings. The value of such premises for local building-taxation is determined by the State Insurance Department, and the value of the premises themselves, without any valuation of their internal construction and equipment, or objects of religious worship therein, will alone be considered.

" 2. In urban districts, workers' quarters and suburban housing estates, where rent is established, sites occupied by religious premises . . . in all cases must be paid for at the usual rates established by the law for the corresponding class of population in relation to the land, of the dwelling-houses occupied, irrespective of the district in which such premises are situated. No payment for the leases of such premises and the sites occupied by them either in urban or village districts may be imposed.

" 3. Local building taxes and rent may be imposed upon religious societies as follows : building-taxation and rent may be demanded from the executive organ of the religious society enjoying gratuitous use of religious premises, according to the agreement, such executive organ being warned that the non-payment of taxation or rent within a certain time will render the agreement null and void and entail the confiscation of the premises. . . ."

As will be seen, this decree, while implying some irregularity in the amount of taxation imposed upon churches before that date, does nothing to provide religious communities with any right of appeal against tax demands levied with the object of bringing about their dissolution.

Is it true to say, in the face of these facts, that " if churches are closed in the U.S.S.R. it only shows they are becoming less popular with the public ? "

Is it true, if a priest is arrested and imprisoned for protesting against the closing of his church by such methods, that " there is no persecution of anyone for his religious beliefs," as Rykoff has stated ?

If Rykoff was implying only that soldiers have not invaded churches, stopped services, and arrested priests for holding them, his statement is justified. Communist methods may be crude, in the light of Western standards, but they are not as crude as that. But if his words are accepted as meaning that no priest has been arrested, exiled or shot, because he has striven to serve his Church and be loyal to his God, then the evidence is against him. The names of those who have faced Soviet Tribunals for their faith are too well known, and their deaths at the hands of the G.P.U. too recent, for the world to accept the disclaimer.

The circumstances surrounding the deaths of two of the most beloved leaders of the Orthodox Church in Russia will be recorded in the next chapter. Here a few general facts concerning the martyrdom of the Russian Church may be given.

Mr. F. A. Mackenzie, former chairman of foreign correspondents in Moscow, and an authority on post-revolution Russia whose sincerity even the Communists admit, has stated :

" The Patriarch Tikhon, in conversation with me shortly before his death, said that, according to the best information that he could obtain, about 100 bishops and 10,000 priests were in prison or exile.

In every prison that I entered while in Russia, and in every district, with two exceptions, that I visited during my last year there, I heard accounts of the arrests of Churchmen, both priests and laymen. My journeys during that year extended from the European frontiers to Vladivostock and from the Arctic Circle to the Altai Mountains in Central Asia."

Evidence which has reached me recently confirms the truth of that statement. It is impossible to secure reliable figures from Bolshevik sources of either the numbers of priests and Churchmen sentenced, or the total number of exiles, but an official statement published in 1927 admitted that 117 Archbishops, Bishops and Metropolitans were in exile or prison, and gave their names. Religious exiles are a class by themselves, receiving the same treatment as criminals, and the conditions under which these martyrs are existing are very bad, whether they are in forced labour camps in the North, or sentenced to "simple exile," to which is attached a certain measure of freedom.

Here is a picture which reveals the mental torture to which the most fortunate of Russian Churchmen have been condemned: by the conditions which exist for all in that land to-day:

"In a provincial town I set out for the address of an Archbishop, overlord of a thousand churches and widely known for his piety and learning. I found so poor a cottage that I thought I must have been misdirected. Opening the door I saw a filthy room occupied by a labourer and his wife and children. The labourer directed me to the adjoining room.

"Here was the apartment allotted by the authorities to the ecclesiastic. It was packed with his books, his wooden bed being in one corner and his one or two simple cooking utensils in another. The old man could not afford a fire, although it was a cold November day, and was wrapped in a thick overcoat. He was bent over a table laboriously doing routine tasks of his Church, for he was not permitted to have a secretary, messenger or other assistant.

"He had been out that afternoon trying to sell some of his books in order to send relief to another Bishop who had been exiled and was starving. He had been imprisoned more than once and expected to be sent back soon."¹

That Bishop was one of the fortunate ones, for at least he had the consolation of continuing his work for the Church. What of those in exile, for whom life holds nothing but memories—and hardship?

Let a letter written from a village in the remote North of Russia tell the tale.

"Five years of migration through prisons and banishment areas have taught us all kinds of things. But the last removal was a bad

¹ *The Russian Crucifixion*, by F. A. Mackenzie, p. 30.

experience for us. Our boy did indeed stand the trying journey to this forsaken corner of North Siberia without much harm. But our fellow-sufferers, the K's, who have a six-months'-old infant on their hands, had a miserable time. Quarters were given to us not in the town, but in a small hamlet seventy kilometres behind it. It is still twenty kilometres to the nearest doctor. All around epidemics rage among the children; scarlet fever, diphtheria, chicken-pox. In the very first days K——, the father, fell ill with erysipelas. Immediately after, his wife, as a result of the insanitary conditions of travel, developed an ulcer on the breast, so that the boy had to be fed artificially. A few days later our boy fell ill with high fever. . . .

"Everyone is well again now, but there are great difficulties as to food. No vegetables to be had, not even onions. The main diet of the native population consists of salted stockfish, a horribly stinking fish. . . . Slaughtering for food is done here once a year in winter; then the meat is put into cold storage and so used until the spring. Ninety-nine per cent of the children here have rickets.

"We get up at five, chop wood, fetch water from the well, light the stove, cook, darn, cut out clothes, wash clothes and give the boy lessons. By evening one is so tired one can hardly stand up. By two in the afternoon it is so dark that the oil lamp has to be lit. It is hardly possible to earn anything here. The Government dole only suffices for the first five days of the month."

Such is the Gethsemane through which thousands of Russian Christians have passed, and which many still endure. It is the price demanded of those who strive to "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's" in Soviet Russia. For the Soviet does not recognise the validity of any Canon Law.

"Thou shalt have none other Gods but Lenin."

One further aspect of the war upon religion must be mentioned. In addition to the confiscation of church property for the relief of those suffering in the famine of 1922, holy relics and sacred emblems have been confiscated wholesale, not for their value, but for destruction.

Throughout the anti-religious campaign, the authorities of different towns have vied with each other in their efforts to close down churches, burn ikons and melt down church bells. This Communist enthusiasm has led to further disputes and resistance. Occasionally the authorities have bowed before the storm, more often the G.P.U. has been called in to assist.

A typical example of the methods employed by the anti-religious forces was reported (as a piece of "economic news") in the *Komsomolska Pravda*, the newspaper of Communist youth, on March 14, 1930.

On February 18, 1930, in the settlement of Samoilovka, the district

committee of the Komsomol held a midnight meeting to discuss the urgent question of collecting the ikons of the town—a settlement of 13,000 inhabitants.

The secretary of the committee, in the course of a speech reported in the Soviet press, accused his members of being backward in organising the “anti-God front” in the district, and compared their activities unfavourably with the achievements of the local militant atheist leader, one Comrade Hatounsky, who had succeeded in closing a church. The secretary proposed a resolution that members should search all peasants’ homes in the region and collect all ikons found there.

This resolution was adopted with enthusiasm, it being agreed that the members should take action on a basis of “friendly competition” and “collect not less than one ikon for every member of the Komsomol.” It was further agreed that on a named date they should “bring all ikons to the market place and there burn them.”

The “competition” began at nine o’clock the next day. Every house was visited. Where the inhabitants refused to deliver up their religious relics, the procedure was simple.

“Babka (old lady), are you in the *Kolhoze* (collective)? Yes? Then why do you keep an ikon? Give it up or you will be excluded from the *Kolhoze*.”

The newspaper mentioned records that by these methods the collection of religious emblems proceeded very rapidly, and with such success that it provoked the jealousy of the Young Pioneers, who decided to adopt similar methods of proving their zeal for the Communist faith.

But, even in Communist Russia, enthusiasm has its drawbacks, for the paper adds that such was the indignation aroused among the *Kulaki* and their supporters that it was necessary to terminate the campaign which had begun so successfully.

By a decree which came into force on November 1, 1930, all priests, pastors, deacons, lay-readers, choir-masters, organists, rabbis, Jewish cantors, Kosher slaughterers, editors of Church magazines—and even artists painting religious subjects for Church organisations—are deprived of food ration cards, and therefore of any food sold under the auspices of the State. They must henceforward buy only in the private market, where prices are, on an average, four times as high as in the co-operatives.

And all the time the ceaseless propaganda against God continues. Posters, holding the Holy Family up to ridicule and contempt as “lackeys of the exploiters,” hang on every hoarding in Russia.

Such is the dark background of the struggle between Church and State in the Soviet Union. Had the Church been willing to capitulate at the beginning, and to allow its teaching to go by default, much suffering would have been avoided. But no Church which held its faith dear could thus surrender its mission. And no Government,

claiming to control the lives and thoughts of its people at every point, could allow the challenge to go unanswered. As in Turkey a generation earlier, so in Russia to-day. In both nations the Christians were the victims ; in the one of Mahomedanism ; in the other of Communism. To the fact that Communism is itself a creed held with religious fervour is due the hardships inflicted upon so many Russian Christians during the past ten years.

It must be admitted, also, that very many priests, who had received their appointments under the Czarist régime, were very willing to see the Soviet experiment fail, and to organise resistance to any decree which threatened the power of the Church, or despoiled it of its treasures.

Thus the Patriarch Tikhon himself, when faced with the Soviet decree ordering the confiscation of Church treasures, declared that the property of the Church was not his to give, and that when the State took it, they took it not from him but from God. According to Canon Law the Patriarch was right. According to the Communist views, he was guilty of "interference with the State," by which is meant "counter-revolutionary activity." And the fact that Tikhon coupled this refusal with an appeal to Churchmen to contribute voluntarily all they possessed for the relief of famine victims in no way expiated his "crime," a crime for which he was to pay by long years in prison, by degradation, and by expulsion from the Church at the hands of a packed jury of priests who had the backing of the State against him.

Nor does the opposition of individual priests, or even the charge of "political conspiracy" often brought against the Russian Church by Communists, justify the unsupported charges made during the trials of leading Churchmen before revolutionary tribunals. These trials were in many cases a mockery of justice, and among the prisoners sentenced by these tribunals have been some of the most beloved and saintly figures of the Russian Church.

Such men were the fifty-four priests and Church workers tried in Moscow before two thousand spectators in the theatre of the great Polytechnic Museum ; Archbishop Czepliak, Budkiewich, and their fellow Catholic priests at Petrograd ; Archbishop Benjamin of the same city, and the aged Patriarch Tikhon himself.

CHAPTER VI

TWO MARTYRS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

"Liberty. . . 'tis a jewel
Worth purchasing at the dear rate of life;
And so to be defended."

BEAUMONT AND MASSINGER.

OF all the martyrs of the Russian Church, the two whose memory is most certain to live and to inspire future generations, are Archbishop Benjamin of Petrograd and the veteran leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow.

Many thousands of humbler priests have paid, with their liberty or their lives, the price demanded of a Church which clings to a standard of ethics denounced and scorned by the ruling party. But none has so truly represented the soul of Russia as these two.

Benjamin was no fat and lazy "Prince of the Church," such as the Soviet anti-God posters show. He was a poor priest, unknown outside his own district until, at the popular election of the new Archbishop, which was held at Petrograd in 1917, shortly after the Provisional Government had deposed the Czar, he was asked by the Petrograd workmen to allow his name to go forward as their candidate for this high position in opposition to Bishop Andrew, who was being supported by the aristocratic section of the population.

The choice was both popular and natural. For many years Benjamin had been well known in the poorest quarters of the city for his kindness and sympathetic attention to the needs, both spiritual and material, of the poor. The most humble man or woman in the city had access to him, and a large part of his time had been spent in visiting the poorest quarters. Archbishop Benjamin was, indeed, the St. Francis of pre-war Petrograd, and no one expressed surprise when he was elected by a large majority.

Benjamin was not a great preacher, but his sermons were always intelligible to the simplest mind. He strove to make his faith a living thing rather than a matter of ritual. To that quality of simple humanity, perhaps, was due the fact that the church where he preached was always crowded, and he was one of the few prominent priests of the Russian Orthodox Church who were generally respected, not only by the members of his Church, but by the ministers and members of other congregations as well.

I stress the circumstances in which Archbishop Benjamin took up his high office, because if there was one priest in Russia whom the Bolshevik leaders might be anticipated to respect as a true friend of the toiling masses, it was this man who accepted the leadership of the Petrograd Church only at the express invitation of the poor who had always been his first care.

None of those things which marked others out as enemies of the Soviet régime applied to him. He was not rich. He was no Czarist

official, masquerading as a servant of the Church. He had not lived in comfort while his people were oppressed. He was not interested in politics. He wished only to do his duty to his Church and his people. But in that simple fact lay the seeds of his downfall, for fate decreed that he should occupy the highest position in the Church in Petrograd at a time when politics played such a prominent part in the life of Russia that no man could remain outside the whirlpool.

The moment when Archbishop Benjamin had to choose between obedience to the orders of the Soviet power and obedience to the dictates of his own conscience, was not very long delayed. It came in 1922, which, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, the famine raging in Russia afforded the Government the excuse for which it was waiting to demand of the Church throughout Russia the surrender of its treasures "for the relief of the famine victims."

Anyone who knows how the Orthodox Church heaped up treasure in the midst of misery during the Czarist régime will realise that the demand in itself was not unreasonable. That the Soviet leaders were glad of an excuse to launch the long-meditated campaign against religion need not be considered here. All that mattered was that, with other countries rushing food and clothing to the relief of the stricken, the demand that the Church should give up her wealth was but to ask her to come to the rescue of her own people.

No one who knew Archbishop Benjamin could doubt what answer he would give to this appeal for help, even if it meant the confiscation of all the treasures which believers had showered upon the Russian Church down the centuries. He declared at once that everything possible must be done to save the lives of their dying brothers and sisters.

Benjamin valued as much as anyone the possessions of the Church and their associations. But he held the opinion that no obstacle of sentiment or interest must be allowed to stand in the way of giving all that the Church had to give, even its most sacred treasures, if the sacrifice would assist so noble and Christian a cause as the saving of the famine victims.

Holding that opinion, accepting the declaration of the Soviet Government that its demand was made solely for the purpose of relieving the famine victims, he urged the authorities not to press for confiscation, but rather to permit the Church to give as a voluntary act all the valuables in her possession. And to make that voluntary sacrifice possible, he suggested that the collection and distribution of the treasures and money so obtained should be placed under the control of the population of Petrograd.

As he pointed out, it would be impossible to him as Archbishop to give his benediction to an act of arbitrary confiscation but he promised to give not only his blessing, but his support, to an appeal to the congregations to surrender of their own will the most sacred possessions of the Petrograd churches.

I have said that Benjamin was no politician. He had a naive belief that such a voluntary surrender to assist the relief of the famine areas would pave the way to an understanding between the Church and the new power, and help to dissipate the antagonism already existing between the religious community and the anti-religious Government. He also believed that, whereas any attempt at confiscation might lead to disorder, the surrender of Church valuables voluntarily might be accomplished without stirring up dangerous feelings.

This belief was unwarranted by the facts. Large numbers of faithful followers of the Church in the city had already been roused to indignation by the anti-religious policy of the Soviet authorities, as clearly expressed in the decree of January 23, 1918, and by all their actions since that date. Feeling against the Government was particularly acute among the workers of the *Putilov Zastava*, the great working-class district of the city.

Archbishop Benjamin knew that discontent existed, for he had remained in close contact with his people, but he also believed that, if the authorities accepted his conditions, he would be able to pacify the population, and the surrender could be accomplished without incident.

It is evident that the Petrograd Soviet was at that time not properly informed concerning the real aim of the confiscation policy announced by the Central Government. The local Bolshevik leaders apparently believed that the orders meant what they said—that the treasures of the Church were required for the relief of the famine victims. For this reason, the local Soviet, in establishing its "committee to help the famine victims" in accordance with their instructions, took up a conciliatory attitude which gave no hint of difficulties.

There existed in the city an association of Orthodox parishes, and, anxious to carry out the transfer in the most peaceful manner, the local Soviet agreed to act in consultation with this association.

The Archbishop was informed of the early conversations which took place between these two bodies, and on March 5, 1922, he received an official invitation to meet the "Committee to help the famine victims," called "*Pomgol*," for the purpose of discussing the most practical method of carrying out the decree in the Petrograd district.

At that meeting, Benjamin produced his plan, which contained three points. Firstly, a declaration that, for the sake of the famine victims, the Orthodox Church in his diocese was prepared to contribute everything it possessed. Secondly, that in order that the congregations might not be antagonised, it was necessary to make the surrender of treasures a voluntary act on the part of the religious community. Thirdly, for the same reason it would be necessary to organise a council representing the congregations, which could assist in controlling the distribution of the money raised by the sale of the Church possessions.

The committee, representing the local Soviet, did not consider it necessary to discuss this proposal. Everyone present accepted it as

completely satisfactory to the authorities. Pleased with such unusual unanimity, at the close of the meeting the Archbishop gave his blessing to everyone present and declared that, if the same happy relations could be preserved throughout the negotiations, he would himself, with his own hands, surrender the ornaments of gold and precious stones on the most sacred Ikon in Petrograd, the Virgin of Kazan, for the relief of the famine areas. He repeated that he asked for only two guarantees—that the realisation of Church property should be conducted under public control, with representation of the religious congregations, and that the same control should supervise the expenditure of the proceeds.

During the days that followed this meeting, the Moscow newspapers published reports of this agreement between Church and Soviet at Petrograd, and their comments were entirely favourable to the proposed plan. Indeed, the Archbishop and his colleagues were held up as examples to other cities, where the plans for confiscation were not proceeding so smoothly, and priests had been arrested for refusing to surrender the property which the State demanded, and sentenced to imprisonment and exile.

Alas for Benjamin's hopes of a peaceful settlement. The agreement reached so easily, and which seemed to satisfy both parties, was not in line with the Church policy of the Central Government at Moscow. The voluntary and willing surrender of Church property by the congregations themselves would certainly not foster the anti-religious policy of the Government; on the contrary, it was more likely to cause men to think well of the Church which thus literally carried out Christ's teaching and "gave all it had to the poor."

Word was sent to the Petrograd Soviet that the agreement was not acceptable and when, a few days later, representatives of the Archbishop called at the offices of *Pomgol* to arrange the details of the transfer and the setting up of the public body to control the collection and distribution of the money raised, they were bluntly informed that neither the question of voluntary transfer nor that of control could be discussed. The only detail that could be arranged was "the day and hour when Government officials would assume possession of Government property."

Upon receiving a report of this development, Benjamin wrote a letter to *Pomgol*, in which he reminded them of the agreement which had been accepted by both sides, and once more expressed his willingness to carry out his offer to hand over the Church treasures subject to control as agreed. To this letter the Archbishop received no answer.

Meanwhile, certain events were taking place in Petrograd which clearly explain the silence of the committee. Soviet officials had actually begun the compulsory requisition of Church property without any notice or arrangement, action which aroused considerable resentment among the religious community, as it was bound to do.

TWO MARTYRS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH 111

That discontent ran strong and deep was admitted by the Soviet prosecutor at the trial which will be described later in this chapter.

"A restless mob demonstrated on March 15, at the Kazan Cathedral," runs the official indictment. "A mob beat the militia in Sennya Street on March 16, and the soldiers had to be called out; stones were thrown at the militia and officials at the Church of Rozhdestvo on April 14, there being alarm, violence and mob rule. Similar violence took place at the *Putilov Zastava* on April 27 and May 4."

Another event which certainly influenced the attitude of the Soviet authorities was a letter which appeared in the Petrograd *Pravda* of March 24, 1922. This letter, signed by twelve Church officials, accused the Archbishop and other Church dignitaries of pursuing a policy which was not in accordance with the aims of the Government, and declared that, even in their attitude to the measures for famine relief, they were influenced by counter-revolutionary aims. The twelve signatories then insisted that the Church must surrender unconditionally all Church treasures.

This letter marked the genesis of the great schism in the Russian Orthodox Church—a split, the effects of which last until this day, and which certainly helped enormously the carrying out of the anti-religious policy of the Soviet. All the twelve signatories shortly afterwards seceded from the Orthodox Church and became the leaders and founders of the so-called "Living Church," an Orthodox organisation which accepted the Communist rule and assumed a rôle similar to that which the Synod of the Orthodox body had occupied in Czarist times—interlocked with, and dependent upon, the State machine. The Living Church flourished for a few years while the plunder of the old churches continued, but has now degenerated into a political appendage of the anti-religious Government of Russia.

This letter marked the turning-point in the controversy. It was recognised by the population, and accepted joyfully by the authorities, as the beginning of a real split in the religious ranks.

But the Archbishop, still intent upon pacifying the population, and still seeking a means of avoiding strife during the process of confiscation, invited two of the signatories of the letter, Vvedensky and Boiarsky, to confer with him. He empowered them to continue the conversations with *Pomgol*, with the aim of reaching a final agreement which would make possible the handing over of Church property without trouble.

In the circumstances described, it is not surprising that Vvedensky had little difficulty in negotiating a new agreement with the Soviet authorities. This he accomplished by the simple method of waiving entirely the two points in the first agreement concerning control upon which the Archbishop had insisted, and asking for one concession only—that any congregation might have the right to retain certain

sacred vessels by contributing alternative property of the same value. This agreement, like the first, was published in the newspapers.

But this group of twelve "rebels" within the Church was not content with the amicable settlement of this dispute. Their aim—or rather, the aim of the Soviet Government—was to extend and maintain the split in the ranks of the Orthodox Russian Church in order to provide an excuse for replacing all Church officials by others who would be obedient servants of the Government.

In the beginning of May, Petrograd for the first time learnt that Archbishop Tikhon, the Patriarch at Moscow, had been dismissed from his office as head of the Church, and the organisation and administration of Russian Orthodoxy had passed into the hands of the twelve priests who had so dramatically intervened in the Petrograd negotiations.

Vvedensky shortly afterwards arrived in Petrograd, and informed the Archbishop of this development, adding that from that day he had been appointed the representative for the Petrograd diocese of this new high governing Synod of the Russian Church and that Benjamin was deposed.

Once again, those who knew Benjamin could have foretold what his reply would be. As long as the question at issue was concerned only with Church property or other minor (from a religious point of view) matters, he was prepared to make every possible concession to reach a peaceful understanding. But now, when a fundamental principle of the organisation of his Church was challenged—and especially when that challenge was instigated by the anti-religious forces of the Government—he refused to yield.

Benjamin's attitude towards the new Synod was understandable enough. A disinterested eye-witness has written of it: "Its origin was so doubtful, its election was so surrounded with intrigue and shameless manipulation, and its background so darkened by the imprisonment of the numerous priests that one found it difficult to regard it impartially."¹

But Benjamin was not content with refusing to yield up the power bestowed upon him by his people. The day following the interview he launched a sentence of excommunication against Vvedensky. This excommunication was to be a temporary punishment, and the Archbishop added that, when Vvedensky confessed his wrong-doing, the ban would be lifted.

Twenty-four hours sufficed to reveal the quarter from which the incitement to split the Church had come. The Soviet newspapers without exception took the part of Vvedensky in the quarrel and threatened that "the battle-axe of the proletariat would soon fall on the head of Benjamin."

The same week Vvedensky, accompanied by a Soviet official named Bakaev, a former president of the Petrograd Cheka, and now acting

¹ *The Russian Crucifixion*, by F. A. Mackenzie, (Jarrolds, 1929), p. 116.

as Government representative in the councils of the Living Church organisation, called upon the Archbishop with an ultimatum—either Benjamin must withdraw his sentence of excommunication or proceedings would be taken against him and other Church officials on a charge of hindering the Government in its task of assuming control of Church property. Benjamin's answer was to refuse to withdraw his pronouncement, which he declared to be a matter of Church discipline and outside the purview of the State.

A few days later, upon returning from a church service, the Archbishop found waiting at his house a detachment of the Cheka, who informed him that they had received orders to search the house and its contents, that a charge had been brought against him and that he must consider himself under "home arrest." For two days Benjamin remained in his home, unable to leave it. Then came the next step—he was removed to prison.

When the trial began on June 11, in the hall of the old Nobles' Club in Petrograd, eighty-six prisoners were before the Court, including priests, lay officials of the Church and persons arrested for taking part in street disturbances during the confiscation of Church property. Among the prisoners were Benjamin himself, the Archimandrite Sergei, the Bishop of Kronstadt, the Deans of the three cathedrals in Petrograd, Professor Novitsky, a famous lawyer and chairman of the Church Council, the Rev. Professor Ognieff, and Shein, a former member of the Duma. An Englishman who was present at the trial has described the prisoners to me as "altogether as distinguished a group as you could find, even in the intellectual capital of Russia."

They were all accused of resisting the decrees of the Soviet Government, and the charge was drawn up on the usual Soviet lines. There was a long description of how Archbishop Benjamin and those connected with him had made an agreement with international capitalists and *bourgeoisie* with the object of overthrowing the Soviet State, and to put every obstacle possible in the way of carrying out the Soviet decree for the confiscation of Church property. Every small incident which had taken place at Petrograd during the preceding weeks was brought up against the Archbishop as evidence of the prisoner's anti-Soviet activities.

There were three main points in the accusations which Benjamin had to face. Firstly, that he began the conversations with *Pomgol* with the intention of bringing about the annulment of the decree regarding Church property. Here it may be pointed out that the fact that Soviet officials had signed this agreement, and the Soviet press approved it at first, did not prevent a charge being made against him of "starting" these conversations—as though it were criminal to attempt to debate any activity or proposed activity of the local Soviet. Secondly, that Benjamin and his officials, in pursuance of this aim, were in collusion with foreign capitalists and *bourgeoisie*.

And, thirdly, to arouse the population against this decree, they had circulated a copy of Benjamin's letters to *Pomgol*. (These copies of the correspondence, it may be added, were delivered to each parish in the diocese in the usual way, as were all official letters written by the head of the Church at Petrograd.) No other evidence was offered for the prosecution.

The trial lasted a month, and during the cross-examination of the Archbishop much time was spent in seeking to prove that Benjamin was in touch with the anti-Bolshevist Bishops of the Karlsberg Conference (the Orthodox sect founded outside Russia by monarchist *émigrés* in 1922) and favourable to the policy of that "counter-revolutionary" Church body in refusing to recognise the authority of the new Living Church. Benjamin's reply to this charge was that he knew nothing about the Karlsberg Church, or the assembly of bishops of the Orthodox Church abroad, and that he could, obviously, express no opinion on a matter concerning which he knew nothing. If it was a political organisation, he added, he was most certainly opposed to it, because in his view the Church must remain outside politics.

Further questioned about his attitude to Soviet decrees he answered that he had been, and was still, of the opinion that Church property should be handed over for the relief of those in need, but that he could not approve the method of confiscation, which, as a Christian, he regarded as sacrilege.

The prosecution asked for the name of his chief adviser, who had instigated the letters he had sent to *Pomgol*. This question was put insistently and evidently with the aim of discrediting him. There is some evidence in favour of the view that the authorities did not wish to pass the death sentence upon Benjamin, in view of his great popularity, and that the real motive of the trial was to destroy his prestige with the people. In putting this question, it was openly hinted that by naming someone he could save his own life. Benjamin's reply was: "I—myself—wrote the letters. And I myself posted them. Further, as Archbishop and head of the Church in Petrograd, I am alone liable to give a decision on such important matters."

Despite the fact that to obtain admission to the public galleries during the sessions of a stage-managed mass trial in Russia, it was then, and still is, necessary to obtain permission from the local Soviet, and despite the presence of numerous guards in the court-room, at the conclusion of Archbishop Benjamin's cross-examination the attitude of those present was distinctly favourable to the Church leader.

The Archbishop was defended by Gourovitch, a well-known Russian barrister who, although a Jew, had undertaken the defence of this beloved prelate when others held back. Ten years later, Gourovitch, who left Russia after the trial, could not speak about Benjamin's attitude and bearing at this trial without tears.

When the State prosecutor attempted to bully Benjamin and to ridicule his attitude, Gourovitch appealed to the President of the Court.

"You may shoot the Archbishop," he declared. "You may imprison him. But I know of no law which permits the State to insult and treat with contempt a most reverend Churchman and beloved man." And the public galleries applauded this protest.

The leading witness for the prosecution was a priest named Krasnitsky, one of the twelve leaders of the new Living Church who had signed the letter protesting against the Archbishop's attitude. Krasnitsky, in the witness stand, was confronted by Benjamin's counsel with copies of church magazines published during 1917 and 1918, and asked if he was the editor of them. He answered "Yes." He was then asked whether he was the author of certain articles appearing in these magazines, and again replied in the affirmative. Counsel then proceeded to read out extracts from the articles, in which Krasnitsky declared it was the duty of every Christian to oppose Bolshevism in every possible way. "Benjamin," said Gourovitch, "has never written anything opposed, as are these articles, to the régime. Yet Krasnitsky appears here as a witness for the prosecution—a man who has completely changed his opinions in the space of a year or two for his own purposes."

Surveying the crowded court, Gourovitch added. "This is the man who tells the Court that Benjamin's attitude is dictated not by any question of faith or principle, but by political considerations."

It may be added that in Czarist times Krasnitsky was a member of the "Black Hundred"—the most reactionary nationalist organisation in Russia. And this same witness had, in 1913, written a pamphlet, issued at the time of the Jewish *pogroms* in Russia, "proving" that the Jews were using Christian blood in the making of their bread. This man, who had supplied the Czarist Government with this mediæval story as an excuse for the mass murder of Jews, now stood before a Soviet Court as one of the heads of the new branch of the Christian Church which was working hand in glove with the Soviet régime.

Undeterred by threats of intimidation, many witnesses came to testify to the innocence of Benjamin. Among them was a Professor of the Technological Institute, Egorov, who, as a lay church official, had participated in the original conversations with the *Pomgol* committee. The Professor flatly contradicted every count of the indictment brought against the Archbishop, and so impressive were his answers that the tribunal, on the demand of the President, interrupted his cross-examination and announced an interval. When the Court met again a few hours later, the prosecution demanded that Egorov should be placed beside Benjamin as a prisoner. The Court concurring in this demand, Egorov was arrested on the spot and his name added to the list of those upon whom the Court would pronounce

sentence. It will readily be understood that this incident did not encourage other witnesses for the defence !

The prosecutor, in the main speech of the trial, could not produce any specific evidence against Benjamin. His speech was couched in general terms and made much of the crimes of the whole Orthodox Church against the Soviet State. He spoke at great length about the assembly of the exiled Church leaders held at Karlsberg, in Jugo-Slavia, which had nothing to do with the trial whatever, and only in the concluding passages of his speech did he advance two facts to support the indictment against the Archbishop. First, that Benjamin was a Prince of the Church—a phrase calculated to arouse adverse feelings towards the leading prisoner on the part of proletarians—and as such was already guilty. And secondly, that Benjamin had never protested against the crimes of Church dignitaries in general, and especially had never protested against the decisions of the assembly in Jugo-Slavia.

A dramatic moment came when the Archbishop, a little, heavily-bearded figure dressed in his ecclesiastical robes, rose to make his last statement before the tribunal retired to consider the sentences.

One who was present in that court-room has told me how, from the moment when the Archbishop rose, the great gathering of 3000 persons was hushed "as though we were attending a church service and the beloved priest had risen to bless us." And the silence continued unbroken until Benjamin had concluded his statement.

Benjamin began by saying that the most painful thing for him in the whole trial was to hear the Soviet prosecutor allude to him as an enemy of the people.

"Five years ago," he continued, "I was chosen Archbishop because all workers and the poor loved me. I am a true son of my own people. I love them and have loved them all my life. All my life I have devoted myself to them, and I am happy to tell you that the common people have returned my love."

Then he proceeded to refute the evidence brought against his fellow-prisoners, the eighty-six who stood on trial for their lives at his side. During this portion of his statement the Archbishop showed exceptional powers of memory. With no notes of any sort, he cited documents, facts and dates which revealed exceptionally logical reasoning, and completely destroyed the "case" for the prosecution. Only on one point was he unable to produce evidence to prove a statement. He paused and added quietly: "But maybe in this one case you will believe me without asking for material evidence. I think it most probable that I am speaking in public for the last time in my life. It is usual to believe the words of a man who knows that he is facing his fate."

Having completed his statement rebutting the charges against his fellow-prisoners, the Archbishop sat down. The President of the

Court, evidently touched by the quite unusual attitude of this man, addressed him in kindly tones.

"You have spoken all the time about others. The Court thinks it desirable to know what you would tell us about yourself."

Benjamin looked round the crowded court before replying.

"What can I say about myself?" he replied. "Perhaps one thing. I do not know what your decision will be—life or death. But in any case, whether life or death, I myself with equal reverence will lift my eyes to God, will cross myself (he did so) and will exclaim, 'I thank thee, my God, for all things.'"

A monk named Sergei, one of his fellow prisoners, then addressed the Court.

"As you know, I gave up everything worldly long before this trial. Are you going now to frighten me by cutting the last thread which holds me to this world? I am not afraid of that. You do your duty. I have pity for you and I am praying to God that he may forgive you."

The sentences were announced the following evening, before a court carefully packed with a politically sympathetic audience. The relatives of the prisoners sat near the front. The rest of the hall was crowded with members of the Communist Party, for on this occasion admission to the final scene was by party ticket.

Ten of the prisoners, including Archbishop Benjamin and the monk Sergei, were sentenced to death by shooting. The remaining defendants received terms of imprisonment or exile.

All attempts to save the life of Benjamin failed, but six of his fellow-prisoners were reprieved and sent to confinement for life by a decision of the Government. During the night of August 12-13, 1922, Archbishop Benjamin, Sergei and two other prisoners were taken from the prison to a spot outside the city, and there executed.

On the following day, when relatives of these four men visited the prison with gifts of food, they were informed that the Archbishop and Sergei had been sent to Moscow under orders from the Central Government. Only later was it disclosed that the death penalty had been carried out.

The second name revered by all Orthodox Churchmen is that of the Patriarch Tikhon, head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The arrest, prosecution and dismissal of the Patriarch from the highest ecclesiastical office in the country was the culminating point of the religious persecution within the U.S.S.R.

For some months before any official action was taken against this veteran Church leader, his activities had been circumscribed and hampered by the Government in a manner which could have but one end. In the autumn of 1922, the G.P.U. brought definite charges against him and he was arrested.

The charges were similar to those advanced against Benjamin. Tikhon was accused of opposing the carrying out of Soviet decrees

to save those suffering from the famine ; of being sympathetic to the counter-revolutionary movement during the civil war, and, thirdly, of not protesting against the activity of the bishops living in exile who had attended the assembly at Karlsberg.

All the evidence went to disprove the first of these charges. It was well known that the Patriarch had issued a proclamation to the people of Russia in which he urged Christians to give everything possible to save the starving. In response to this invitation from the head of their Church, many Orthodox organisations began to raise collections of money for famine relief. In many provincial towns this collection was stopped by order of the local authorities, pending a decision on whether such a procedure should be permitted by the Præsidium of the Central Executive Committee. The decision of the Communist Party is interesting. It was recorded in Moscow under the date December 9, 1921, and reads as follows : " Taking into account the many demands received from various religious communities for permission to raise collections for the aid of famine sufferers, the Præsidium of the Central Executive Committee has decided to grant permission to religious communities and church organisations to make such collections and to ask the Central Committee for Famine Relief to get into touch with such organisations for the purpose of reaching an agreement concerning the manner in which the collections shall be raised, and how the money thus obtained shall be distributed."

The Patriarch, in a further appeal, declared that the Church could not isolate itself from so terrible a calamity, and urged once again that congregations should make sacrifices for the suffering population. He even enumerated specific treasures of the Church which should be given up for such a purpose.

Like the ill-fated Archbishop Benjamin, he stipulated only that the expenditure of the money so raised should be under a central control, in which Churchmen should take part, and he declared that he was opposed to the forcible requisition of Church property.

In regard to the second accusation against him, a pronouncement was on record in which he had adjured every priest to remain aloof from both civil war and politics.

Similarly incorrect was the third charge—of sympathy with the anti-Soviet Orthodox bishops living outside the country.

It was evident, however, from statements made by Krylenko, the Soviet prosecutor, that even the Government did not regard these accusations as more than a means to an end—the deposition of Tikhon from his high office.

Replying to a Communist delegation which had come to him to demand the death penalty, Krylenko said : " You may rest content. The fate of Citizen Tikhon is in our hands, and we will have no pity for this representative of a class who during the centuries oppressed the Russian people. We declare war against religion ; war against



PATRIARCH TIKHON

Head of the Orthodox Church in Russia during the early days of the Soviet regime.

every religion. The Russian people have been freed from that yoke."

On May 12, 1922, a group of priests, who had led the split in the Church, visited Tikhon in prison and demanded his resignation from the office of Patriarch. This group was headed by Vvedensky and had a long conversation with the aged leader.

They directed his attention to the fact that eleven prisoners, sentenced to death for taking part in anti-Soviet demonstrations, were about to be executed, and implied that by agreeing to resign, the Patriarch could save these eleven lives.

The official *communiqué* records how, after a short interval for thought, the Patriarch agreed to accept this ultimatum, and wrote a letter of resignation, transferring his powers to a priest named by himself.

Despite this capitulation, the Patriarch was kept under arrest, while, with the aid of the Government, the so-called "Living Church" began to take over churches. Many of the religious communities appreciated the "resignation" of the Patriarch at its true worth, and Vvedensky and his council did not have things all their own way. During the weeks that followed evidence of strong opposition from the Don to Moscow appeared almost daily in the Soviet press, together with reports of many arrests.

Early in May, the Government paused in its anti-religious crusade to call a meeting of the Orthodox Church Assembly created from the ranks of priests and laymen sympathetic to the régime and the new Living Church. This Assembly, be it noted, met in a country where no meeting is permitted without the express permission of the Commissar for Home Affairs, a country in which a solemn war had been declared upon religion in all forms.

Hundreds of priests who had supported Tikhon were in prison or exile. Tikhon himself was in prison and forbidden to appear before this "council," which had been staged in order to complete his degradation by "removing" him from the Church, and thus making it possible for the Soviet authorities to bring him to trial as an ordinary citizen.

The Assembly was held in a theatre, and Vvedensky stated the case against the Patriarch. The theme of his speech was "Choose between Tikhon and Christ."

Those who wished to speak on Tikhon's behalf were not heard. The vote was taken openly and the result was not in doubt. All but six of those present, including many Archbishops who had received their appointments under the Soviet régime, voted in favour of the resolution expelling Tikhon from the Church he had served so long and so well.

"Patriarch Tikhon has betrayed Christ and betrayed the Church," ran the decree of expulsion issued by this Council. "Following Church law, we proclaim Tikhon to be deprived of the patriarchate

and of monkhood, reverting to the status of a simple private citizen. From now on, Patriarch Tikhon is Citizen Vasily Beliavin."

The arrangements for the trial were complete, when a growing volume of protests from all parts of the world began to pour into Moscow—from Britain, France, Germany and the United States. So unanimous were these protests that even the Soviet Government held its hand and the date of the trial was repeatedly postponed.

It was first announced for November, 1922. Then postponed until April 16, 1923. Shortly before that date, when the name of the President of the revolutionary Tribunal who would try Tikhon had been announced, the Moscow *Pravda* published the news that, owing to new evidence, the trial was again postponed.

During these months the ex-Patriarch remained under arrest, living in one room in a former monastery under close guard. He remained under arrest until June 26, 1923, when the press published the news, quite laconically, that Citizen Tikhon had been released.

From that date until his death in 1926, Tikhon officially held no office in the Russian Church, but such was the moral prestige of this priest that in fact he was regarded by multitudes as the head of their faith until he died. His last days were spent in the same monastery where he had been imprisoned during part of the period spent under arrest.

"Every morning crowds of faithful souls would gather waiting to see him, sometimes with petitions, sometimes begging for direction in matters of faith, sometimes wishing merely to pay him reverence," one of the British correspondents in Moscow at that time has written. "Travelling, as I was then, in some of the most outlying parts of the Republic, I found that as soon as people knew that I was a friend of the Patriarch, they would do almost anything for me. They would beg to know all the details of his life, how he looked and how he lived. They gave me messages for him, messages which had no mention of anything political but told of how the hearts of the people beat true to him and begged him to send secretly instructions telling them what they should do."¹

And when Tikhon died, tens of thousands of people stood by his graveside to pay a last tribute to the memory of a beloved Church leader.

¹ *The Russian Crucifixion*, by F. A. Mackenzie, p. 138.

CHAPTER VII

SCAPEGOATS OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

"He who has few enemies, can have security without a fuss ; but he who has the whole universe for enemy can never be secure, and the more he resorts to cruelty, the feebler his rule becomes."

MACHIAVELLI.

ON the banks of the Lower Volga stand a group of factory buildings, forming one of the largest units of production erected under the Five Year Plan. The buildings are enclosed by a high concrete wall, surmounted by barbed wire. At intervals along its mile or more of boundaries, look-out posts have been erected—roofed platforms from which the surrounding countryside is visible. And in each sentry-box stands an armed soldier of the military section of the G.P.U. While the G.P.U. men at the main entrance scrutinise carefully the credentials of all who enter and leave the factory grounds, these silent sentinels, who stand with fixed bayonets along the walls, keep the *saboteur*—the counter-revolutionary who would attempt to wreck the achievements of the Workers' State—at bay.

That factory is typical of hundreds of industrial enterprises in Russia. And equally typical are the elaborate precautions taken to defend it against the unseen foe who may seek to undo what the labour of the workers has achieved. Every Russian knows that, if those factories were left unguarded for an hour, the watching enemies of the proletariat might strike. For them the need to defend their achievements from the hidden hand of reaction is an urgent duty. A similar need exists to protect the factories and equipment from the petty pilfering which is widespread among Russian workmen.

Even after all precautions are taken, the Russian Government admits that it does not always win. "Economic espionage" and "sabotage" are overworked words in the U.S.S.R. Anything, from the deliberate destruction of a factory to the bungling of a task under the Five Year Plan, or an inherent defect in the Plan itself, may be "sabotage" in the light of the peculiar Soviet psychology and social conditions.

Sabotage is, as one writer has said, "an easy offence to suspect and a difficult one, apart from a convincing personal confession, to prove." Following the consolidation of the Soviet régime many members of the professional and intellectual classes of old Russia accepted service under the new rulers. They did so, in many cases, not from any Communist leanings, but because there was no other course open to them. And for the same reason—because brains and technical knowledge were urgently necessary—the Soviet absorbed them into the new industrial structure, though not without misgivings, as the fierce propaganda designed to increase the flow of "proletarian specialists" for the proletarian factories has shown.

From the moment when the New Economic Policy was abandoned, and the era of real Communisation began, the presence of these members of the former *bourgeois* classes, with their "alien ideology," in responsible and "key" positions, has been a weak link in the chain of Soviet power, and a source of irritation and suspicion to the Communist Party. The imperative needs of industrial expansion have conflicted with the prejudices of the Government. The declarations of the technical specialists—the professors, scientists, engineers and the rest—that they were content to serve their country without worrying about politics were frigidly received and politely disbelieved. They were there on sufferance, closely watched by the G.P.U. And not a few of the heart-searchings on the part of the Communist leaders which have followed partial or complete breakdowns in their industrial plans during recent years have been occasioned by the necessity of deciding whether such flaw was unavoidable or intentional, political or industrial—a miscalculation on the part of the State Planning Commission, which imposed an impossible task upon the unit of industry affected, or the result of "counter-revolutionary economic sabotage" on the part of someone, clinging to the beliefs of the capitalist world, who desired the plan to fail.

A difficult question to answer in a nation where, inevitably, many mistakes and much waste of men and money power have accompanied the rapid expansion of industry. But the Communist Party is congenitally unable to accept the protestations of good faith made by those who are not of proletarian origin. The rulers in the Kremlin always fear the worst when dealing with the *bourgeoisie*. And, being human, they no doubt see in the presence of *bourgeoisie* in industry a convenient reserve of scapegoats for mistakes which might otherwise recoil on their own heads. Hence the state of mind which sees the hand of the *saboteur*—the wrecker—behind every difficulty and delay. Hence the whole series of economic trials which have taken place at Moscow and other cities during recent years. Hence the martyrdom of some of the most brilliant Russians of their generation, who imagined that by accepting the conditions of life in Russia to-day and serving the new State, they would at least be left in peace.

As has already been said, in Russia the punitive expedition is a recognised and freely-used weapon for enforcing the decrees of those who control industry. Either the requirements of those rulers are achieved, or someone does not want them to be achieved, which is a crime against the State. Occasionally an honest failure is admitted. More often the G.P.U. provide their apologia to public opinion by arraigning a whole group of experts, shooting some out of hand and bringing a few to a stage-managed trial which is at once an explanation to the public and a warning to every other technician that failure, whatever the cause, is not wise.

The fact that no technician or industrial specialist now has the right to carry out his own theories, and merely obeys the instructions issued

to him by the State industrial trusts, makes no difference. The intellectuals, who, generally speaking, may not even advance proposals on any point of policy, let alone carry out their own ideas, supply only the purely technical guidance to industry. Everything else is in the hands of the Red directors attached to every factory. But that fact, also, is apt to be ignored.

Evidence of the constant threat under which these specialists live and work, is shown by the fate of three of the most outstanding engineers in the Soviet Union—Meck, Paltchinsky and Velitchko—who were executed by the G.P.U. without trial in the spring of 1929 for unproven acts of sabotage against the régime.

Meck was, before the overthrow of the Czars, one of the leading experts in railway construction, and the head of one of the biggest private railways in Russia. Velitchko was a railway engineer, who held a high position in the State railway administration in Czarist days, and one still more responsible during the first revolution. Paltchinsky, a moderate Socialist by conviction, was a specialist in geological research, who was later connected with refrigeration and transport.

During the period of the Provisional Government, Paltchinsky took a prominent part in the defence of the Constituent Assembly. Openly opposing the Bolsheviks when they first seized power, he later admitted the folly of fighting an established fact, and accepted the necessity of helping to rebuild a Russia which had been denuded of its intellectuals by the two revolutions and the civil war. From that time, he undertook service under the Soviet authorities, and strove to restore the Russian railways to a high standard of efficiency.

All three men loyally carried out their duties, and were, in the course of time, raised to important posts in the transport and refrigeration organisations.

Three years ago, in 1928, difficulties made themselves apparent in the distribution of food ; difficulties due to tasks being imposed upon the railways system and the refrigeration plants in excess of their capacity. There followed the usual sequence of events—the search for culprits, and the arrest of these three men.

The town populations were complaining of bad food, of hold-ups in certain goods, of unequal distribution, and an explanation, convenient to the régime, had to be given to them. Meck, Paltchinsky and Velitchko, former officials of the old régime and members of the *bourgeoisie*, supplied a convenient and ready-made answer to the grumblings of the population. Without warning they were arrested and shot. A few days later the news of their execution was announced, together with a terse intimation that they had been guilty of "deliberate sabotage carried out in connection with an international capitalist plot designed to starve the Russian population."

Such activities of the G.P.U. acting under administrative order, are reinforced by the Soviet legal machine, which has staged a whole

series of big trials of specialists designed to convince the population that only the "unsleeping eye" of Soviet justice is safeguarding the Republic from enemies within and without.

First of these great economic trials, which loom so large in the history of Russia during the past three years, was the Schachty case of May, 1928, when a group of mining engineers working in the Don Basin coalfields were charged with sabotage, deliberate attempts to wreck the development of the mines, and other destructive measures, and placed on trial for their lives.

The arrest of these specialists followed an alarming fall in the production figures of the Don Basin coalfields, due to the wholesale desertions of miners owing to the unsatisfactory food and housing conditions in the region.

The reasons for the drop in production appeared simple enough. Perhaps the authorities felt that, in this case, the uncorroborated evidence of sabotage tendered by the State prosecutor might be strengthened with advantage. What transpired at interviews between the G.P.U. officials and the prisoners prior to the opening of the trial is not known, but at the first session of the Court one group of the accused deliberately confessed their guilt, although there was little proof of sabotage and even less of destructive methods. This was the first occasion on which those accused of economic offences before a Soviet Court confessed their guilt and sought to secure a reduction of sentence by long statements condemning themselves as enemies of the State and expressing contrition—a departure from precedent which has since become a familiar feature of sabotage trials in Russia.

The trial was staged at Moscow, to the usual accompaniment of propaganda and demands by the population for severe penalties against the "wreckers."

At the end the death sentence was pronounced on a number of the accused, and duly carried out in seven cases. Others were condemned to periods of exile in the forced labour camps in the North.

On September 3, 1930, the Soviet press published the names of the chief organisers of a further group of specialists engaged in an alleged plot to undermine the Five Year Plan and the economic structure of the U.S.S.R.

All of those concerned were well known economists and agricultural experts who had for more than ten years served the Soviet Government in important posts, the best known among them being :

Vladimir Groman, once known in Soviet circles as the "People's Economist and hero of Labour." He is a prominent specialist in the State Mining Department.

Professor Chayanoff, one of the best known of present-day Russian economists.

Professor Kondratieff.



A SCENE DURING THE SHACHTY TRIAL
Showing some of the industrial specialists who were charged with "economic sabotage."

Professor Yurovsky, a financial expert, who collaborated with Sokolnikoff and others in reforming the Soviet currency after the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

Professor Vladimir Bazaroff, translator of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* in Russia.

What is the political history of these men? Kondratieff resigned from the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in 1918 and was one of the first Russian intellectuals to unreservedly place his services at the disposal of the Soviet Government. Groman, even during the first revolution and the period of the Kerensky régime, was a Social-Democratic Internationalist—a member of the extreme Left wing of that party, politically nearer to Bolshevism than to Social-Democracy. Suchanoff, another of those arrested in the group, was also a member of the Left wing; moreover, Suchanoff gave valuable assistance to the Bolsheviks in the weeks following the October revolution. Chayanoff was a co-operator, and worked with the Bolsheviks from the earliest days. He is one of the most brilliant of all Russian specialists—a novelist and historian of considerable repute in addition to being a scientist.

This practical evidence of loyalty to their country did not prevent the G.P.U. from charging these same men with counter-revolution, and with "planning to establish a régime of landlords and capitalists." Nor did it deter the Russian Government from representing Groman and Suchanoff as "agents of the Menshevik central committee" (in exile) and Chayanoff and Kondratieff as leaders of a secret "Peasants' Party" which, despite its illegality, is supposed to have been able to recruit a membership of hundreds of thousands under the very eyes of the G.P.U., which membership is placed at the disposal of conspirators inside Russia and interventionists abroad.

One or two comments may be made concerning these charges. Professor Kondratieff was accused, among other things, of delivering, in 1922, a speech welcoming the growth of capitalist feeling among the peasants. Yet at that time the official point of view of the Soviet State was exactly in accordance with the Professor's speech. Indeed, until 1926, the Russian Government was theoretically encouraging the growth of individualism in the country districts. Among the Communist officials who publicly subscribed to this doctrine, was one of the present editors of the Moscow *Pravda*, who declared that individualism was a progressive step away from the communal feeling which had existed among the peasants under the Czars.

Since 1923, however, Communist policy regarding the peasant has swung to the Left, and so in 1930, the *bourgeois* Professor is arraigned before Soviet justice for making a declaration of policy since discarded, while the proletarian editor who agreed with him remains undisturbed.

Other charges of "hostility" to the Five Year Plan brought against the accused were supported by passages from books written

by the prisoners. It is only necessary to add that these books were in every case issued by the Soviet publishing department, which exercises a strict censorship on every printed word that sees the light of day in Russia, and that for some years these works circulated in Russia without question. The books were, indeed, officially approved at the time of their issue as accurately expressing the Soviet policy regarding agriculture and the countryside, and that official approval was only withdrawn when uneasiness began to be felt concerning certain branches of the Five Year Plan.

Such "charges," so easily refuted, naturally raise doubts concerning the validity of the whole indictment against this group of prisoners.

Another specialist who suffered arrest in similar circumstances was A. Sapojnikov, a professor of chemistry and well-known specialist on explosives. Since the earliest days of the Communist dictatorship, this intellectual had worked faithfully under the Bolsheviks, occupying a chair at the Military Academy, and being sent upon many scientific and technical missions by the Russian Government to Germany, France, England and the United States. Sixty-three years of age, he had never taken any part in politics. Following his arrest and departure for exile the American Chemistry Society appealed to the Russian Government to release Sapojnikov on the ground of his services to science.

The Moscow correspondent of the *Cologne Zeitung* recently wrote from Moscow that the arrests of specialists, scientists and other groups of intellectuals are still proceeding on a large scale. It is of no use to include here lists of names of those arrested during the past two years, because these arrests are executed without any system or reason. Further, to give names of prisoners might give the G.P.U. reason for thinking that they are in illegal communication with other countries. The expulsion from the Communist Party and the Institute of Marx-Engels of the well-known Communist, Professor Riazanov, reveals more clearly than any recent incident the ferocity of this anti-intellectual campaign now proceeding. It seems clear that in many instances the Russian authorities are arresting specialists without taking anything, either origin, service or record, into consideration.

One further arrest—reported in the *Cologne Zeitung*—may be noted to confirm this statement. At the beginning of March, 1931, the G.P.U. arrested the famous physicist and Academician Lazaroff—whose name is well-known to every scientist in the world. Lazaroff never took any part in politics and always gave his signature to declarations of loyalty to the régime. He rendered great service to the Soviet Government by his discovery of phosphor in the Murmansk region, while his laboratory was often shown with great pride to foreigners visiting the Soviet Union.

His arrest was, apparently, due to a protest made by this professor

openly to high officials against the growing volume of unnecessary political obligations demanded of him.

Many similar instances of arrests of intellectuals who have served the Russian State, followed by the imposition of severe penalties, might be quoted.

Sabotage, that elastic phrase, was the official explanation for the shooting of Tujilkin, Tsikareff and Tsvetoff, the chief specialists of the Moscow fire brigade, whose executions were announced in September, 1930. The charge for which they suffered the extreme penalty of the law was of encouraging incendiarism "by neglecting precautions against fire," thus placing Soviet factories in danger.

Certainly fires in industrial plants were then, and still are, very numerous within the U.S.S.R., but the evidence that these are due to sabotage is not so convincing as the more rational explanation—that they are due to carelessness on the one hand, and to the wilful acts of workers with real or imaginary grievances on the other. But these things are difficult to admit in a nation which is a proletarian dictatorship, and so three more technical experts in the service of the Soviet State had to face the executioner.

August, 1930, was a bad month for food supplies at Leningrad—the shortage of vegetables, large consignments of which had become rotten owing to delays *en route*, being especially marked. Once again the authorities acted swiftly and ruthlessly—this time against the specialists entrusted with the task of distributing and transporting South Russian vegetables to the North. The newspapers began to shout in headlines the inevitable phrases concerning "class war on the Vegetable Front." The *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the paper of Communist Youth, declared that "for every carload of decayed vegetables the guilty persons must be held to legal responsibility. Only this will save Leningrad from a flood of decayed vegetables."

Other papers took the same line. A group of specialists concerned with the handling of vegetables were arrested and exiled. From first to last not one word was said admitting the possibility that maybe the railways or the distributors were asked to undertake an impossible task, given insufficient time to carry it out, or faced with a shortage of labour. There was a shortage. The people suffered. The Government sought safety in vague charges of a political nature.

I do not say, in this case, that the charges of negligence may not have been justified. All I know about that particular incident is that I found Leningrad denuded of even potatoes at that date. But it is significant, I suggest, that in Russia the system is never wrong, while the technical expert is always wrong. Such a contradiction is susceptible of but one explanation—a definite policy of letting the experts "take the knock" whenever any failure occurs.

Yet another case which occurred during that black autumn for the specialists of Russia was announced on September 24, 1930, when it became known that forty-eight agricultural specialists had been executed

without trial, among them Professor Karatygin, the main charge against whom was that he recommended agricultural co-operation modelled on the Danish plan. Yet this very same policy had been accepted by Lenin himself, and at the time of the New Economic Policy the official point of view was clearly expressed in the sentence : "The road of our villages to Socialism lies not through the old commune, but away from the commune through co-operation to collectivism and socialism."

In the next chapter is given a more detailed description of an industrial sabotage trial and the methods employed by Soviet justice when judging "class enemies."

It is difficult to believe that the Soviet authorities have chosen the moment of maximum strain in industrial development to conduct an offensive against their *bourgeois* specialists merely in order to "purge" industry of their presence. How, then, can these trials and executions be explained, in view of the conflict of evidence outlined?

One obvious reason is to be found in the necessity to "explain" the partial failures inevitable in any great national effort such as is now in process of achievement in Russia. Another may be found in the fact that many of these specialists secured their appointments in the days of the New Economic Policy, when the Leninists were in undisputed power. Since then, the men who held the reins of government have been thrust aside by Stalin and his henchmen. With the dismissal of Rykoff from the post of President of the *Tsik* (Parliament) the voice of the Leninists disappeared from the inner councils of the Communist Party. The men who had encouraged the professors and technicians to serve their country are to-day the "Opposition." Many are themselves in exile. The former *bourgeoisie* no longer take their orders from moderates—even Communist moderates. The era of violent, uncompromising Communism has begun, and one phase of that movement is the elimination, as and when convenient, of all non-proletarians from posts of responsibility. And in Russia, alas, dismissal is usually accompanied by arrest, accusations that are difficult to refute, and exile. It might be inconvenient to have unemployed ex-officials at large in Moscow or Leningrad.

I am assuming that the real offences of these men are political—their *bourgeois* birth—rather than economic. No other explanation is possible unless one is prepared to admit the existence in the Soviet Union of wrecking tactics and plots on an ever-widening scale. And, as the German Socialist newspaper *Weltbuhnd* has stated : "It is difficult to imagine how any sabotage can be carried out in Russia, considering the strict surveillance which the G.P.U. extends to every citizen and every concern. If in fact sabotage is carried out on such a scale as the news in the Soviet press would suggest, it established one fact. That there must exist sufficient mass dissatisfaction to make sabotage possible in spite of the perfect organisation and widespread activities of the G.P.U."

Many cases could be quoted showing that the facts point to class prejudice as the mainspring of this organised campaign of terrorism to which the intellectuals of Russia are being subjected.¹

In addition to the arrests which are announced, many other members of the *bourgeoisie* suffer pains and penalties which are never reported, either in the Soviet press or abroad. Two typical cases will suffice to show the insecurity which clouds the lives of every intellectual in Russia to-day.

An engineer named M—— was the proprietor of a small factory in a provincial city in Russia. Upon the nationalisation of industry which followed the Bolshevik rising, this man was recognised as a specialist who could not easily be replaced in the particular work on which his former factory was engaged and, having no political record against him, he was left to continue his duties as general technical manager.

During the years that he had owned the factory, this industrialist had managed to maintain good relations with his workpeople, some of whom now occupied posts of responsibility in the same factory under Soviet control. Perhaps because of this fact, the former owner, in his new capacity of chief technical manager, was able to maintain a high level of production through the difficult years which followed the civil war, when raw materials were almost impossible to obtain, and labour difficult to find.

In accordance with the usual practice enforced throughout Soviet industry, the factory was under direct Communist control, working conditions being in the hands of a committee of workmen, and the finances of the factory in charge of a "Red Director."

At the time of Lenin's New Economic Policy, the Soviet Government announced, as a measure calculated to relieve the acute housing shortage, that private citizens would be permitted to build small houses for their own occupation, or to participate in the building of a co-operative house. In response to this invitation, M—— built a four-roomed house for the occupation of his wife and himself, and paid for it with the aid of a mortgage, relying upon the definite promise of the Government that all who thus added to the housing facilities of Russia should enjoy undisputed possession of their dwellings.

In 1929 he was suddenly arrested and charged with mismanagement of the factory, withholding details of the correct income of the factory for taxable purposes, and making false returns concerning his own income.

To these charges he replied that some mistake must have been made, as the management of the factory, apart from technical advice, had been entirely in the hands of Communist officials for the past ten

¹ It remains to be seen whether Stalin's much-quoted speech of June 23, 1931, enunciating a policy of "being kind" to the non-proletarian technicians employed in Soviet industries, is mere "window-dressing" or a real change of heart.

years. Further, that it was no part of his duties to make any return of profits to the taxation authorities. Such returns had been prepared by the Communist management and he had not even seen them. Finally, as regards his own income, he pointed out that this was derived solely from his position as technician at the factory, and was therefore known to the management and, presumably, to the authorities.

The answer was conclusive—but that did not stay the hand of the G.P.U. His refutation of the charges brought against him was swept aside, and he was sentenced to three years' exile with forced labour. The house which he had built under a Government guarantee was confiscated, together with all other possessions.

A former business man managed, after the suppression of private trading, to secure a subordinate post in a Government office in Moscow. He possessed a small "nest-egg"—all that was salvaged from a good position in pre-revolution days—and when, later, he married a school-teacher, who also possessed a small amount of capital, they pooled their resources and built a small house, similar to that described above, on the outskirts of Moscow. But they did not secure a mortgage, preferring to use their own combined capital and believing, perhaps, that money put into a house under a scheme proposed by the Soviet Government itself, was as safe as money could be in Russia to-day.

So it might have been, had not a brother of the man been arrested for private trading, and sent into exile. Whereupon the police interviewed the house-owner and enquired from whence had come the money to build such a comfortable home?

He answered truthfully that it was built out of savings put by in Czarist days by his wife and himself. This explanation the police refused to accept. It was, they declared, obviously impossible for either the man, as a minor official, or his wife, as a school-teacher, to have saved such a sum out of their pay. Therefore it had obviously come from the same source from which the brother had obtained his money—i.e. illegal private trading. They could not be allowed to remain in possession of a house secured by an offence against the State, so the house was confiscated and the husband fined several hundreds of roubles, to be deducted from his pay by weekly instalments. When I last heard of that couple, they were striving to live on a weekly income, utterly inadequate, after the deduction of the "fine," to maintain life without acute hardship.

Another minor Soviet official was the son of a Moscow industrialist famous in pre-war days for his enlightened views—unusual among his class—and for his philanthropic activities. This man had gathered together one of the finest private collections of paintings in all Russia. He had built and endowed hospitals. He had erected the first working-men's club to open its doors in Moscow.

What could be more natural than that his son should be proud of

a father so free from the current prejudices of his time. Because of that pride, the son preserved, in a tin box in the room which he shared with three others, letters, newspaper cuttings and other documents testifying to the charitable bequests made by his father.

A year or so ago, certain officials in the department in which the young man was employed came under suspicion, and a series of house-searches were made by the G.P.U. seeking evidence of "economic espionage." Whether they found any I do not know, but in the course of their round-up of suspects, they ransacked the belongings of that young man, and discovered, not the evidence of his *bourgeois* extraction, which they already knew, but evidence, in the shape of testimonials handed to his father, that he was proud of it.

The Soviet mentality refuses to admit that there were any sincere idealists in Russia before 1917, apart from revolutionaries in exile. Much of their propaganda is designed to impress upon the people that Czarist Russia was a tyranny unrelieved by a single spark of human compassion. Here was a young man, obviously of "*bourgeois* ideology," who tacitly contradicted that view.

The son was arrested, charged with "counter-revolutionary sentiments," and sentenced by administrative order to three years in exile. The written evidence that his father had been a public-spirited man, and had even earned the displeasure of the Czarist authorities by reason of his liberal views, was destroyed. Soviet citizens must be taught, forcibly if necessary, that in pre-Soviet days there existed only two classes—exploiters and exploited. Whatever charges may be brought against the Russian Government, the "crime" of toleration is not one of them.

Such examples of acts of tyranny against individuals, unimportant perhaps in the world view, but of such overwhelming importance to the victims—might be continued *ad nauseam*. But those quoted above suffice to reveal the very pronounced bias which exists in proletarian Russia against those of *bourgeois* origin, and I will include only one further instance.

The victim in this case was the head clerk at a branch of the State Bank. Although not a member of the Communist Party, he was sympathetic to the Government and its policy and had loyally accepted the Communist creed from the moment of the October revolution which placed Lenin in power.

He had taken no part in politics in the past, but as the Communist plans for developing Soviet industry were unfolded, he found himself definitely interested in this mighty attempt to regenerate his country, and began to attend Communist lectures, meetings and classes.

Either because of this awakening interest in the policy of the Government, or because his work was valued, he was promoted and sent as assistant manager to a branch of the bank in a small agricultural town, where, as is usual, the direction and management of the branch were in the hands of a committee of local Communists.

Some little time after this transfer, a campaign was organised for the "proletarianisation" of all Soviet institutions. It was discovered that the man had come of prosperous *bourgeois* stock; for that "crime" he was dismissed from his post.

A year and a half later, the discovery was made that the management of this particular bank was not entirely in accordance with Soviet policy, or with the instructions issued from time to time from head office at Moscow. An investigation was made and, so ran the official statement, evidence of mismanagement was found. Whereupon the former assistant manager (who had been dismissed eighteen months before) was arrested and sentenced to forced labour in exile. No other arrests whatever were made—the group of "proletarian" managers, who had been in sole control of the affairs of the bank for one and a half years prior to the investigation, and who had wielded absolute control over the bank's business during that time, went scatheless.

Coupled with the economists and technicians as the twin-enemy, with them, of the Soviet State, are the *kulaki* or rich peasants.

It was in January, 1930, that President Kalinin announced that, by its decision to "liquidate" the *kulaks*, as a class, the Communist Party had entered on the last decisive struggle with Russian capitalism. As every peasant in Russia owning two or three head of cattle and a few chickens is classified as "rich" or a *kulak*, the desperate nature of the decision was obvious.

This new policy entailed the destruction of the economic power and possessions of millions of peasant farmers in all parts of rural Russia who had, by good husbandry, thrift, hard work, luck, intrigue or money-lending to their poorer neighbours, managed to secure incomes or possessions in advance of the general level of the countryside. But their higher incomes had enabled them in many cases to employ labour for wages—and this fact caused the Communist rulers of Russia to see the shadow of returning capitalism, and brought forth the statement that: "We will never tolerate a Russia divided into Communist cities and a capitalist countryside."

Orders were issued that collectivisation—the pooling of land and the machinery for working that land, including cattle, horses and implements—must be speeded up, and the *kulaks* presented with the alternatives of entering the "collective" with their poorer neighbours, and submitting their possessions to common ownership and use, or being forcibly dispossessed on the pretext that their land was needed for the collective. In which case they were either allotted other land, usually of poorer quality, some distance away, or charged with obstructing the authorities in the carrying out of the law and sent into exile.

Although any Russian peasant family in possession of a cash income equal to one pound sterling a week or over may be denounced as *kulaki*, and find themselves in the ranks of the persecuted; although

the strongest possible pressure is brought to bear upon them—by discrimination in favour of the collectives in such matters as taxation, the supply of seeds, the hiring of tractors, and so on—the task of destroying the economic power of the *kulaki* has proved to be one of the most difficult of the many problems facing the Soviet Government. The numbers of the *kulaks* help to explain this—the Soviet policy of rapid collectivisation involves, in the opinion of one Communist official, the physical elimination of over five million *kulaks*.

When the policy of collectivisation was announced in 1928, the exact methods by which the “drive” of individual peasant farmers into the collective farms should be carried out were stated in vague terms, possibly so that this new policy could be interpreted as a voluntary movement. At the same time, however, instructions were issued to local Soviet officials informing them that collectivisation was to be carried out as speedily as possible. The individually-minded peasants, who had defeated Lenin in the first attempt to socialise the countryside, were in turn to be defeated by Stalin.

It was an experiment fraught with great dangers for the Soviet régime, for those peasants controlled the livestock on which Russia depended for meat, and were the producers of the wheat and rye on which the land depended for bread.

Events proved that the dangers were not exaggerated. In the months following the issue of these instructions, large areas of rural Russia saw conflicts between peasants and authorities scarcely distinguishable from civil war. Mass searches of the peasants' houses were made by the militia. The peasants were first asked to join the local “collective” or commune. If they refused, not only cattle, poultry and implements were requisitioned, but actual personal belongings, while, in many cases, the peasants themselves were arrested and deported.

The peasants replied to these forms of compulsion with direct action on their own account. Many Soviet officials engaged in organising the task of collectivisation were murdered in cold blood.¹ Those who sympathised with the new policy were also killed. The Government suppressed these crimes by wholesale round-ups of the richer peasants and mass executions in the districts affected.

While the more daring and desperate among the peasantry openly challenged the power of the Government, there developed another tendency much more dangerous to the stability of the régime, and the effects of which are felt in Russia to this day.

This was the growth of sabotage among the peasantry. They began the wholesale destruction of livestock in order to prevent their cattle and horses being taken without compensation.

A Soviet official, M. Kvirin, quoted in a message sent from Moscow in March, 1930,² stated that “by comparison with the autumn of

¹ *Isvestia* reported that 24,000 anti-Communist outrages occurred in rural Russia in 1928 (issue of December 8, 1928).

² *Manchester Guardian*, March 3, 1930.

last year the number of sheep in Russia proper had diminished by 23 per cent and the number of pigs by 28 per cent." No figures were available at that time in regard to horses and cattle but the report stated: "Here too the reduction has been considerable."

"Besides menacing the already scant supply of the country of meat and dairy products, this destruction of live stock, in so far as it affects working animals, reduces the prospective efficiency of the new farms," continued the same correspondent.

In a word, faced with a fundamental challenge to the right to own property or the means of production, many Russian *kulaki* preferred to kill their animals, either for food or as a protest against the hated collective. And the *seredniak* or "middle" peasants similarly objected to their one or two horses and cows passing into the possession of a collective farm mainly composed of the poorest class of peasant, who had made no corresponding sacrifice.

For two months the campaign of violence continued—confiscation on the one side, and resistance and sabotage on the other, until it seemed probable that the growing tendency of the peasants to plant only enough seeds for the needs of their own families would endanger the grain supply of the country, as the continued killing of livestock was endangering the meat supply.

In this bitter controversy there was much to be said for both sides. The Communists saw in the change from "individual" to "collective" farming both a political and an economic necessity. The peasants, on the other hand, whose sole interest in the revolution had been to get rid of the landlords and secure possession of the land, saw in the new doctrine an attempt to deprive them of the results of their toil and to reduce them to the position of hired servants of the State. It was the last stand in Communist Russia of the instinct for private property. Just as peasants killed and ate their cattle rather than surrender them to the State, so there were many reports of peasants eating, concealing, or selling their stocks of seeds, rather than contribute them to the common funds of the collective farms.

Although, during this campaign, the area of the collectives and communal farms grew rapidly—even more rapidly than the authors of the campaign had expected—it was the peasants who won the first victory in this sweeping transformation of the countryside. So widespread did the opposition to compulsory collectivisation become that, early in April, 1930, Stalin himself issued a sensational statement to the Soviet press, throwing overboard the officials who had been hastening the process by violent methods and declaring that they had exceeded their authority. Those who had been driven into the collectives by force, stated Stalin, had a legitimate grievance and must be permitted to leave again if they wished. Meanwhillet he policy of collectivisation by such voluntary methods as education and propaganda was to continue.



COLLECTIVISED PEASANTS PREPARING TO GO OUT EN MASSE TO CULTIVATE THE SOIL ON A NEW
COLLECTIVE FARM IN THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

The factor which brought about the dramatic change in policy—an almost overnight change in policy—sheds an interesting light upon conditions in modern Russia. Letters sent by peasants to their sons serving in the Red Army are subject to censorship, and so bitter was the opposition to the Government revealed in these letters at this time that the whole policy was reconsidered by the Central Executive Committee of the party, and a hasty decision made to call off the campaign and pursue it by other and less violent methods.

The problem of the socialisation of the countryside, never before achieved in any country, but since this date proceeding apace in Russia, is outside the scope of this book. Here I am concerned only with the official opinion which classified the *kulaki* with the *bourgeoisie* as enemies of a proletarian State. For this reason, throughout the campaign, violence and contempt have been the weapons used for the "liquidation" of the *kulak* class. Plays have been written and films made to show that the rich peasant wants only to return to the days of exploitation. Every sort of silent pressure has weighted the scales against them. On March 2, 1930, the organ of the Menshevik Party abroad declared that not less than forty peasants were being shot every day and that the number of victims was growing. These executions were carried out without any trials and most of them were not reported in the press.

L'Humanité—the organ of the French Communist Party, in its issue of February 19, 1930, gave a list of peasants executed in Russia without trial and justified the terrorist measures then being applied by declaring that the extermination of the whole class of *kulaks* and those allied with them was a necessary policy which all true Communists must support.

Paul Schaeffer, at that time Moscow correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and regarded even by the Soviets as a reputable observer, wrote at the same date that the Soviet authorities were shooting on many days from six to ten peasants a day. And for every peasant shot, a hundred were exiled. Tens of thousands were banished to Siberia, the North of Russia or Turkestan in this campaign.

Many more were dispossessed and their property sold by auction or handed over to the local collectives.

According to the law, evicted families were entitled to three days' notice, at the end of which they were to leave their holdings without any baggage, but the Soviet press of those months contained ample evidence that the evictors dispensed with the formality of notice and took possession at any hour, in order to give those turned out no opportunity to dispose of any part of their possessions secretly.

In cases where a peasant agreed to enter the collective farm, he had to surrender his possessions for the common use. According to the original plans of the Government, the Red Army was to supply 75,000 directors to organise and run these collectives. Any peasant refusing to perform the tasks allotted to him might be punished or

even expelled from the farm. It is eventually planned that the members of the collectives shall receive wages for their toil like factory hands, and the collective farms shall become, to all intents and purposes, State holdings.

From this elimination of any profit from personal effort sprang the fierce opposition of the peasantry to the policy of swift collectivisation. That opposition the Soviet Government sought to overcome by violence rather than reasoned debate, holding the view, no doubt, that the end justified the means. It was a conflict, like the religious conflict in Russia, between two diametrically opposed creeds—that of a State which regarded private property as a crime and that of a peasantry which had always thought of revolution in terms of what it would bring them in private possessions.

The attempt to communise 120,000,000 peasants is the most difficult problem which the Communist Government has had to face. Whether the attempt will succeed, it is too early to say. A surprising degree of success has been achieved up to date, but that the issue is still undecided is proved by the fact that the *kulaki* remains one of the two "bogey-men" of Bolshevik propaganda in Russia. The other is the counter-revolutionary—represented by the class of specialists and professors against whom the charges of sabotage are made. These two—the intellectual and the rich peasant—are the scapegoats of the Five Year Plan.

CHAPTER VIII

STALIN IN WONDERLAND

"When I used to read fairy-tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!"

Alice in Wonderland.

IN October, 1930, a sensation was caused throughout Soviet Russia by an announcement that the G.P.U. had discovered the existence, among engineers and technicians in the service of the State, of an illegal political party called the "Industrial Party"—the leaders of which had instigated a widespread plot for the overthrow of the Workers' State.

It was further announced that this Industrial Party had for three years been in consultation not only with anti-Soviet Russians abroad, but through the *Torgprom*, a committee of Russian *émigré* business men and financiers in Paris, with the French and British General Staffs; and that preparations for the launching of war upon the Soviet Union in 1930 had been postponed only at the last minute owing to the dramatic successes achieved under the Five Year Plan, which had made armed intervention for the destruction of the Communist régime at that date "inconvenient."

Finally, it was announced that of the ten leaders of this conspiracy, one—Paltchinsky—had already been shot for sabotage; another—Engineer Hrennikov—had "died during investigation," and the remaining eight had confessed their guilt in long, voluntary statements which exposed their base treachery, and would be brought for trial and sentence before a Soviet Court.

The indictment prepared by Krylenko, the State Prosecutor, in this greatest of all economic espionage trials, was a remarkable document. According to this statement, there existed in Russia, "not only a nation-wide systematic plot to wreck the economic development of the Soviet Union, but this conspiracy has the support of influential White Russian organisations abroad, and even involves high officials in the French, Polish, Rumanian and other Governments. Although all the ringleaders have been arrested it is claimed that nearly two thousand persons are involved in the concerted plan to undermine Soviet efficiency in all branches of industry, and to stir up internal strife preparatory to armed intervention from abroad.

"This counter-revolutionary movement is said to date back as far as 1926, and it developed into a definite plan for the overthrow of the Soviet Government with the aid of foreign armies and the substitution of a democratic government which would restore industry and land to their former owners and give full sway to the development of a capitalistic economic system. The restoration of the monarchy had evidently been discussed, but discarded as impractical. The skeleton of a temporary cabinet which included Denikin had

been drawn up and even the essentials of a constitution had been agreed by the group meeting in conference."¹

Further, "according to the signed confessions of several of the conspirators, the organisation within the country had the full backing and aid of a group of prominent internationally-known financiers, politicians and military men from several of the leading countries of Europe. It is even alleged that Poincaré and Briand were fully cognisant of the plot and had indicated their support and sympathy, and that Colonel Lawrence of England was implicated. Connections were also said to have been maintained with Deterding, Vickers, Urquhart, Nobel and other prominent capitalists interested in the restoration of capitalism in Russia."²

The plan for the overthrow of the Soviet Union was, according to the Soviet indictment, conceived on a bold scale. "The original plan is alleged to have called for a military attack against the Soviet Union as far back as 1928, but because of the inability of the conspirators to stir up trouble within the country the attack apparently had been postponed until 1930, or 1931. The present year (1930) proved singularly unfavourable because of the depressed economic conditions abroad and the growing strength of Soviet industry."

This delayed plan "called for an attack upon the Soviet Union by Poland, Rumania and possibly other border states equipped and directed by members of the French General Staff, with at least the passive assistance of the British Navy in the Black Sea. The external attack was to be accompanied by uprisings within the country and a combined attack upon Moscow and Leningrad by White Russian Armies. The money for this vast undertaking, it is understood, was to have been furnished by Deterding, the Governments of France and England, and former Russian industrialists."

Such, in its main outlines, was the astounding indictment which formed the basis of the trial of the "Industrial Party." The document was fully supported by the evidence of the eight prisoners at the trial, who seemed anxious only to prove that any mercy extended to them would be misplaced.

These eight defendants were :

Professor Leonid Ramzin.

Professor Charnovsky, of the Supreme Council of National Economy.

Professor Fedotov, of the Textile Institute.

Engineer Kuprianov, of the Textile Industry.

M. Ochkin.

Engineer Kalinnikov, of the State Planning Commission.

M. Sitnin.

Engineer V. A. Larichev, of Gosplan,

all responsible professors, engineers and officials who had occupied

¹ *Moscow News*, November 16, 1930.

² *Ibid.*

high posts in the Soviet industrial machine for some years prior to their arrest.

The indictment against these men was hailed in Russia as proof that the insistent warnings issued by the Russian Government about the coming war upon the Workers' Republic were true. Undoubtedly, the citizens of the Soviet State believed that a simultaneous civil war and external war against the forces of capitalism had only been averted by the watchfulness of the G.P.U. Was not the testimony of the prisoners, and their remorse, evidence enough?

"Seldom has a case aroused as much popular interest as this one, and the doorways of the House of the Trade Unions (where the trial was staged) were congested all day by hundreds of working men and women who were trying to get inside. The hall itself was filled with a proletarian audience. Old women in shawls, peasants in leather boots and home-made overcoats, soiled workers direct from their places at the bench, Red Army soldiers and students of law made up the bulk of the vast audience which filled the hall and overflowed into the corridors, listening to the amplifiers in efforts to catch every word uttered on the stage. Many had come from great distances to be present."¹

Inside the court-room was gathered all the paraphernalia usual at these mass-trials. In the centre of the stage, at a long red-draped table, sat the four judges. "Saratovsky listens, head resting on palm, smoking a cigarette. Vyshinsky carefully studies the faces of the defendants. Lvov, of the Amo motor plant, and Ivanoff, of the Krasny Putilov factory of Leningrad, lay members of the Court, gaze now at the audience, now at the papers before them, or try to figure out the faces of the defendants as they testify."

As the trial proceeds, the foreign spectator notices the intrusion of propaganda even into the court-room itself—a strange bizarre feature of a trial in which eight men may receive the death sentence.

"There is a drone of powerful light-projectors, the grind of cameras. Omnipresent operators with traditional persistence, crawl about the 'stage' shooting pictures. Flocks of photographers emerge from the audience, mount the stage most casually and snap endless photographs of the judges, defendants, and the other people on the stage.

"To the left, inside a grey box especially built for the occasion, sit the eight defendants. In the first corner is Ramzin who smokes cigarettes and takes notes on the proceedings. Ramzin has refused the services of a lawyer; he prefers to defend his life himself. Behind him is Charnovsky, with shaven head and uneasy look, and next to him is Sitnin, a stout prosperous person with trim moustache and an official air. The defendants study the audience with about the same curiosity with which the audience studies them. They seem unconcerned—as if the proceedings did not involve their lives."²

¹ *Moscow News*, November 29, 1930.

² *Ibid.*

The trial opened on November 25, 1930, and on the same day the usual procession of workers "to demand the death penalty," which is an inseparable feature of all great Moscow trials, took place in the streets surrounding the Hall of the Trade Unions.

"Demonstrators numbering over a million carried posters with the inscriptions: 'Down with the accomplices of intervention,' and 'We demand a firm attitude from the proletarian Court.'"¹

"Moscow is accustomed to witnessing huge demonstrations, but seldom in its history has it witnessed such a dramatic outburst of public feeling as took place on the afternoon and evening of the first day of the trial, when hundreds of thousands of working men and women, students, Red Army soldiers, pioneers and *Komsomols* (young Communists) armed with bands, banners and torches paraded through the snow-covered streets of the city singing their defiance of all enemies of the Soviet Union," stated the *Moscow News*.

"Most of Moscow's industrial plants closed down early in the afternoon. All day the streets were crowded; knots of workers gathered on every street corner discussing the case. In the afternoon large groups of workers marched through the streets bearing flaming red banners with the legend: 'Death to all traitors of the Soviet Union.'

"Towards five o'clock the city grew dark, and the demonstration turned into a torch-parade as hundreds of *flambeaus* were borne aloft, fiery symbols of the spirit of the workers who, engaged in putting across the Five Year Plan, are determined to stand by the Soviet Union which is the embodiment of the proletarian revolution, the victory of the Soviet workers over their class enemies. It is these hundreds of thousands of singing, defiant and resentful workers who constitute the bigger court in which the enemies of the Workers' Republic are being tried."²

Inside the court-room—the room in which the twelve leaders of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party had received their death sentences in 1922—the first prisoner to be called upon to testify his guilt was Professor Ramzin.

"I unreservedly admit my guilt," he began. "I do not intend to defend or justify myself before the Supreme Court and the country as a whole. For how can I defend myself or justify the tremendous crimes which I have committed? I can only succeed in softening my guilt by frank and truthful testimony and by sincerely admitting my crimes and mistakes. Therefore, by bringing here my full and whole-hearted repentance, my pledge to cut off all my connections with anti-Soviet circles both in the U.S.S.R. and abroad, by fully disarming myself and discontinuing forever my struggle against the Soviet Government, I wish to reveal with merciless clarity the whole truth before the Supreme Court and before the wide masses in our Union as well as the Proletariat the world over.

¹ Tass Agency report, November 25, 1930.

² *Moscow News*, November 27, 1930.

"I shall not attempt to justify myself or to lay the blame for my actions on others. By treading together with the Industrial Party the path of sabotage, treachery and betrayal, I wish, without sparing myself, to take advantage of our terrible lessons to achieve two aims: firstly, to reveal our criminal work in connection with the external preparation for the intervention in all its intricacies and thus to ease the burden of the U.S.S.R. in its struggle against the military plans of world capitalism. For, while working in alliance with the world *bourgeoisie* I had an opportunity to observe its hidden schemes and to discover its real aims, namely, the territorial division of our country and its economic and political enslavement; and secondly, unveiling before you without concealment the whole picture of the criminal activities of the 'Industrial Party' within the country and the chief counter-revolutionary nests of engineers, I wish to show by our shameful experience the utter worthlessness of counter-revolutionary aims, to show their crying contradiction to the actual interests of our country.

"I should like, as a result of this trial of the 'Industrial Party,' that the word '*finis*' be placed on the dark and shameful past of the intelligentsia as an aloof caste. That all engineers to a man should enter the big family of the proletarians heroically striving towards socialism, and by their self-denial, work away the stains of sabotage and treachery."

Having uttered that sweeping self-condemnation, the Professor proceeded to outline with a great wealth of detail the whole galaxy of plots and counter-plots mentioned in the indictment. Regarding the charge of economic sabotage, he confessed to taking part in attempts to retard industrial development and throw Soviet industry out of gear by creating disproportion between one branch of industry and another, and by "freezing" capital through its investment in developments of no immediate importance, thus reducing the amount of credit available for the immediate purposes of the Five Year Plan.

Regarding foreign intervention, he declared that the Industrial Party had two natural allies in its task of promoting war—the first the *Torgprom* Association of Russian business men in Paris, and the second the capitalist countries, notably France and England.

He described meetings with the French General Staff, between whom and the interventionists it was decided to establish close connection, and three meetings in London with "Mr. Simon" of Messrs. Vickers (concerning the existence of whom that firm disclaimed all knowledge), with Colonel Lawrence of Arabia, and with an unknown "Sir Philip." "Both Mr. Simon and 'Sir Philip,'" declared Ramzin, "told me that France was the principal organiser of intervention and that England would participate in the preparation of intervention."

Continuing, he stated that, while in the first period, until 1927, England participated actively in the organisation of war upon the

Soviet Union, "England's interest appreciably declined" following the advent of the MacDonald Administration to power in 1929. "The participation of France was a dominating factor from beginning to end. The impression created by the information which we received was that the soul of the organisation of intervention was M. Poincaré, who was actively supported by M. Briand."

"As far as the policy and plan of the organisation of intervention are concerned, we received information on this question in condensed form at a meeting with members of the *Torgprom* while in Paris in October, 1928," stated Ramzin at another point in his long testimony. "It was pointed out that France herself did not propose to come out with military forces; at the most she would furnish military instructors, perhaps the help of the sea and air fleets, and that the real military forces which it was proposed should be used for the realisation of intervention would be those of Poland, Rumania and the Baltic Border States. Further hope was given of the use of White Emigrant military forces, that is, the Wrangel Army which was maintained abroad."

The chief tasks of the military organisation within Russia, which the Industrial Party was alleged, in these confessions by its own leaders, to be striving to build up, were stated by Ramzin to be "firstly, to make arrangements to keep the Industrial Party informed on conditions within the Red Army and the sentiments prevailing among the rank and file—also in the Red Navy; secondly, to establish close contacts with the interventionists and later on with other military organisations. Then it was called upon to work out and apply measures to lessen the country's ability to defend itself; and finally, to extend direct assistance during the actual counter-revolutionary revolt—this to be done by carrying out a number of subversive acts, such as ruining airplane motors, the motors of tanks and so on." All this was to be achieved, not by enrolling mass members, but by enlisting the aid of specialists and technicians occupying responsible posts within the Soviet economic and military organisations.

"The criminal work of the Industrial Party in the internal preparation of the intervention by creating and spreading crises in the fields of industry and transport as well as the formation of a *bloc* between the Industrial Party and the Working Peasants' Party, directed towards the intensifying of crises in agriculture, food supply, co-operatives and finances, considerably increases the temporary economic difficulties of the Union, and sharpens the class struggle, thus harming the national economy of the country," declared the witness, in the closing passages of his remarkable speech. "Unquestionably, the absence of this sabotage and of the active opposition of counter-revolutionary organisations would have made the economic conditions far better and the rate of industrialisation and socialist construction would have been even more rapid."

"I must admit that during the period of sharpened class struggle

and the intensified preparation by world capitalism for the attack on the Soviet Union, the Industrial Party aimed at the overthrow of the Soviet Government and the formation of a *bourgeois* Government. In this way it joined the forces of active enemies of Socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, finally becoming a weapon in the hands of French Government circles and White emigrants.

"Lastly, I must admit that the entire burden of responsibility for the above-mentioned criminal activity of the Industrial Party must be placed on the members of its Central Committee and above all, on myself as the ideological leader and the most active worker for the preparing of intervention."

Day after day the amazing spectacle of men on trial for their lives striving to prove their own guilt and utter corruption continued. Had the confessions been written by a paid propagandist with both eyes on their propaganda value to the Soviet Government, they could not have more admirably served their purpose.

Thus Fedotov follows Ramzin. A white-haired old man of nearly seventy, he rises in the blaze of the cinema lights to swear away his own life by the evidence he pours into the three microphones before him, to a chorus of cameras.

"I confess my guilt," says the old man sadly. "I am really convinced that the Soviet Government represents the will of the workers and peasants. Yet only last month I didn't believe it. I am sorry for my crimes. I am satisfied to die for them. But if you think I can still be useful to you, I promise that in future I shall put all my energies into doing what I possibly can to help you."

He is followed by Ochkin, another prisoner. "Unlike Fedotov, his voice was firm and hard. He spoke of the 'Industrial Party' in a perfectly business-like manner, recounting all the details and negotiations of the organisation in its efforts to smash Soviet industry, arouse mass unrest, and pave the way for foreign intervention. He might have been a professor delivering a lecture on an abstract subject; so coolly did he talk of the *Torgprom* and of his own activities in it."

If this unnatural spectacle of men on trial for their lives joining heartily in their own condemnation and uttering not one word in self-defence aroused grave doubts outside Russia concerning the methods by which those "confessions" had been obtained by the G.P.U., their evidence brought them no public thanks from those who benefited by their abject testimony.

"One of the outstanding features of the trial," declared the *Moscow News*, "is the fact that all the accused admit their guilt freely; and have even expressed some indignation about the foreign press which is engaged in raising one of its characteristic anti-Soviet hurricanes of lies about the case, alleging that the accused have been arrested and are being tried on the basis of forged documents. The defendants not only denied these statements made by the foreign capitalist press,

but offered to sign statements commending the G.P.U. for its kindly treatment of them; all of them having gained weight while in prison. . . .

"The peculiar quality of the confessions is their deep admission of crimes committed against the Soviet proletariat. This brings out the profound differences of calibre between the real revolutionist and a counter-revolutionist. The former never failed to use the courtroom as an airing place for his sincerest feelings and convictions: asking for mercy and promising better behaviour in the future did not belong to that peculiar code of etiquette by which a revolutionist went fearlessly to meet his death to justify his cause. No true revolutionist ever apologised for his principles."¹

An incident which occurred early in the trial was the discovery that Pavel Ryabushinsky and Vishnegradsky, two of the Russian exiles named in the indictment as having taken part in the plot and as being candidates for office in the Government which the plotters hoped to establish, were dead and buried some time before the plot was hatched. Vishnegradsky died in Paris on May 9, 1925, and Ryabushinsky in 1924.

Upon this flaw in the indictment being noticed, Krylenko requested the Court to postpone its next sitting "to enable the prosecution to analyse the evidence and work out a plan for conducting the further proceedings." The next sitting of the Court was accordingly cancelled.

Upon the trial being resumed, the Court decided that Vladimir Ryabushinsky should take the place of his dead brother, Pavel, in the indictment, and all the charges made against the dead man were accordingly brought against his brother, also in exile!

Charnovsky, another of the prisoners, in the course of his confession and testimony, explained the political programme which the plotters had prepared.

"The new Government was to be a *bourgeois*-democratic one, the legislative body to be an elected parliament," he stated. "Certain large-scale industrial plants of outstanding importance were to be merged so that the largest blocks of shares of the joint-stock companies who were to run them, should be owned by the Government.

"Then came agriculture—peasant farming. Our policy was in favour of the strong '*moujik*,' as has already been stated in this testimony.

"Tactics hinged primarily on bringing about an intervention with the assistance of forces from without, for it would have been naive, to say the least, to count on affecting any change by the forces within the country itself."

Charnovsky then proceeded to explain the organisation headed by Ramzin, by which the plotters kept in touch with the French General Staff, and laid their plans for the economic sabotage of Russian industry as a preliminary to armed intervention of foreign armies.

¹ *Moscow News*, December 3, 1930.

"While I feel the full weight of my guilt and the blameworthiness of my actions against the Workers' Government, and here and now express my readiness to expiate my guilt by the sentence this Supreme Court may deem fit to pass ; or by my work in the future should the Court consider that possible—I certainly do feel a kind of relief that at last this long nightmare of the Industrial Party has ended. I feel relieved that all these diverse influences, these onerous and irksome duties that used to crush and make me a man living a double life, are over for ever."

"Bit by bit it becomes possible to build up a complete and lucid picture of what has been happening inside Soviet technical circles since 1926 and even before then, as one listens to the testimonies of professors, engineers and technicians which fully disclose the activities of the sinister crew of wreckers and *saboteurs* now facing the charge of high treason before the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union," declared the *Moscow News* when the closing stage of the trial had been reached. "Seldom in history does a case arise involving so many complex intrigues, avaricious lusts, reminiscent ideologies and monstrous disregard for the millions of workers and peasants who had put their trust in them, as the present sabotage case with its menacing undertones of foreign invasion intending to deliver the decisive blow in extirpating once and for all the Soviet Union and its revolutionary idealism."

"The wrecking activities of the members of the Industrial Party, headed by Ramzin and Fedotov, were intended as a prelude to the inevitable crash which would come when French, Polish, Rumanian and Finnish armies would smash across the frontiers, while the English navies would throttle Soviet Russia from the sea."

"Soviet industries, weakened by internal mismanagement and economic maladministration, through the shrewdly calculated and diabolical plotting of the engineers and directors in charge of strategic positions, would make such resistance as the Soviet masses could muster against the invasion, and readily crumble in the face of the economic chaos in the rear. In this manner the Soviet Government was expected to capitulate—not, however, before its leaders would be butchered in cold blood ; and the iron heel trample down the revolutionary section of the proletariat in order to make the Soviet Union safe for fascism and foreign capital."

Typical of the feelings aroused by this trial abroad were the comments of a British newspaper which has always preserved an impartial attitude towards the Communist State :

"The setting of the trial in Moscow of eight leaders of the 'Industrial Party' is fantastic and cruel. It grips the imagination and shocks the conscience. The mobilisation of loud-speakers and cinematographic cameras to give the fullest publicity to the trial of eight men on a capital charge is contrary to West European

conceptions of decency and justice. It is not easy for Englishmen, living in a country where contempt of Court is a serious crime, to understand or pardon the encouragement given to factory workers, school-children and even near relatives to press before conviction for the death of the accused. But perhaps the strangest feature of the trial is the attitude of the prisoners. All eight have pleaded guilty, six have waived their right to be represented by counsel. All have given testimony of the most incriminating nature against themselves. There has been a scramble to turn King's evidence."¹

The trial proceeded in a welter of words—statements and cross-examination. On December 5, 1930, Krylenko rose to make his final speech as State Prosecutor.

When he demanded the shooting of all the accused, a mighty wave of applause "suggestive of the scoring of a goal at a football match" swept the court.

This final speech for the prosecution lasted eight hours, and Krylenko's closing words were: "When millions of workers send greetings to the G.P.U. expressing their readiness to defend the Soviet Union and to pay with their own blood for the right to build the Socialist State; when the world proletariat also considers the Soviet Union its leader; when the *bourgeoisie* concretely attempts to destroy the Soviet Union, we demand the shooting of all who would help the other side in this coming struggle."

Krylenko was followed by the accused, who made their final appeals for mercy, "unanimously admitting their deepest guilt."

Professor Ramzin, in his final words, pleaded that his life showed his desire to take part in Socialist reconstruction, and declared that the sentence of death demanded was just.

"I admit my guilt," he said. "These are my last, and I believe my final, words to an audience of this size. During the last twenty years I have made speeches and lectures, and this may be my last—and I believe it is my last—public appearance. A few hours before the end one has no time to be clever."

"With a full consciousness I admit my guilt. The prosecuting attorney asks how you explain this readiness to accuse oneself instead of defending oneself. After months in prison and months of investigation, every one of us is conscious of his errors and crimes. We do not come here to defend ourselves but to capitulate."

"No matter what the result, I go away with a calmer soul than when I came here. During the eleven days here I have felt the hate and poison of the people toward me, and the waves of public indignation outside the walls. I felt the intense scorn of the speech of the prosecuting attorney. Maybe not now, but in time to come that wave of hatred will calm down . . . we have tried in some small degree to correct our errors."

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, December 1, 1930.



PROFESSOR RAMZIN, FEDETOV AND FELLOW PRISONERS LISTENING TO EVIDENCE WHILE FACING TRIAL AT
MOSCOW FOR ORGANISING THE " INDUSTRIALIST PARTY " PLOT

Note the microphones.

"Now I think of the punishment about to be meted out to us. After the struggle and the shame and the lack of faith, it is better to die. And yet one is torn with a desire to live. Perhaps I grasp too late the great possibilities of Socialist construction. These giant possibilities make me desire to help to achieve miracles such as have never been achieved before. But the decision of the Court must stand, and I do not dare to guess what it will be. Let the Government decide which is of more advantage—my death or my work. If the Republic needs my life it can take it. If I am spared I promise to devote myself completely to the Soviet Government and help to build the future Socialist State."

Charnovsky—Larichev—Ochkin—Kalinnikov—one by one the remaining defendants rise to confess their guilt and plead for mercy.

"The prosecuting counsel demands our death, but how could it be otherwise? Our crimes were too severe," declares Larichev. "Let the Court decide whether I am socially dangerous or not. I have no right to ask for or expect mercy. Any punishment meted out is deserved."

"No matter how severe the verdict may be, it will be a just one so far as I am concerned," concludes Kalinnikov.

"I only say to the Court that no matter what punishment they give me I shall consider it just," says the aged Fedotov. "There is no excuse for us. We are all guilty of the crimes we have set out. But besides that, I am guilty of betraying the principle of my life—morality and honesty. I stooped as low as to accept bribes. . . ."

The following morning Sitnin (whose Communist son had demanded the death sentence to be passed upon his father) and Kupriyakov made their last statements, admitting their guilt and asking for leniency, that they might by their work in the future, demonstrate their loyalty to the new faith within them.

Considering the "offences" to which these eight men pleaded guilty, involving, if true, wholesale treason against the present Government of their country, only one sentence seemed possible. Yet right up to the moment when Judge Vyshinsky rose to announce the decision of the Court, foreigners present at the trial believed that the defendants, by their sweeping "voluntary" confessions, might save their lives. A rumour that they would not be shot did, indeed, gain wide circulation in Moscow, based probably on the unusual consideration extended to the prisoners by Krylenko during the cross-examinations and the neglect of that experienced "spearhead of Soviet class justice" to follow up various openings which the prisoners, in the course of their evidence, provided for his forensic talent. That failure, I would add, may not have been unintentional.

The Court reassembled to pass sentence at midnight on December 7. The court-room was filled with members of the public who had sat patiently since the doors opened at six o'clock to witness the dealing out of proletarian justice on the wreckers.

The reading of the *prigovor*, or *résumé* of evidence given at the trial, lasted a full hour, during which every one in the court remained standing, judges and defendants included.

Then came the sentences—Ramzin, Kalinnikov, Larichev, Charnovsky and Fedotov, were sentenced to death by shooting, and all their property confiscated; Ochkin, Sitnin and Kuprianov to ten years' imprisonment, with confiscation of property and loss of civil rights.

"Tremendous outbursts of spontaneous applause greeted the sentences," says the *Moscow News*. "People in the audience actually stood on their chairs to cry their enthusiastic approval of the death sentence for the traitors. Contemptuous shouts of '*saboteur*' rang out.

"Kalinnikov flung away his ear-phones (used in listening to the words of the judges), trembling; the others bowed their heads as they began to walk out. Charnovsky took one last look at the audience before he vanished; while Ramzin, lost in thought, was the last to go. The vociferous plaudits of the spectators continued until the last defendant was out of sight. Outside the waiting throng took up the shout and cheered the sentence of the Court—to deal to the would-be destroyers of the Soviet Union the highest possible legal punishment."

Thirty-six hours later, following the appeals of the five condemned men to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party, it was announced that a reprieve had been signed by Kalinin, President of the *Tsik* (Red Parliament). Stating that the Soviet Government would not pursue a policy of vengeance in the case of utterly helpless men who had fully confessed their crimes and promised repentance, Kalinin commuted the death sentences to imprisonment for ten years, with confiscation of all belongings, and the sentences upon the other three defendants were reduced from ten to eight years' imprisonment.

A statement issued in Moscow announced that the mitigation of the penalties was due to the prisoners' "confessions" and to the assistance which they gave the authorities by disclosing the "plot" to invade Soviet territory and other plans for intervention and wrecking the Communist State.

"Thus comes to an end the most interesting drama in recent Soviet history," remarks the *Moscow News*, in recording these events.

Examining the *verbatim* reports of the official shorthand writers of the evidence given at the trial, one must admit that this elaborately staged piece of "justice" was interesting, if only for the light which it throws upon what it is possible to make the Russian people, isolated from the outside world, believe. For the study of those amazing "confessions," surely unique in the history of great trials in any country, leaves behind a persistent and annoying doubt whether the great "Industrial Party" plot ever existed outside the imaginations of the defendants and the official documents of the trial.

Is it possible that, in staging this mighty scenario of war and counter-revolution, Comrade Stalin and his Government were guilty of making a trip to Wonderland? Was the British and foreign press correct when it declared, almost with one voice, that the G.P.U. had overplayed its hand, and that the spectacle of eight men, on trial for their lives, voluntarily spending hours in prison preparing condemnatory statements designed apparently to remove the slightest hope that they might escape the firing squad was too improbable to be accepted? Remembering the propaganda value of the trial, and the fact that the Soviet Government was not averse to having an *alibi* to explain the growing tension of life which the Five Year Plan was then imposing upon their population, it is at least conceivable that these eight men were first arrested, and then offered the alternatives which it is known had been offered to many inmates of Soviet prisons before 1930—to "confess" crimes of which they have never heard, or to be executed, without trial or publicity.

If all those eight men miraculously found salvation—and faith in Communism—while incarcerated in a G.P.U. prison and simultaneously saw the error of their ways without any prompting from others, how explain the fate of one of their number, who admittedly died in prison "during investigation"?

Is it possible that Hrennikov, alone among them all, refused to give false witness against himself to save his life, and that his decision was followed by his death for the "crime" of spoiling the pattern of the trial as planned by the G.P.U.?

And if this theory is rejected, as personally I think it must be, what other possible explanations of those "confessions" remain?

The whole of the evidence upon which the existence of any plot is based depends upon statements made by the eight prisoners and other witnesses within reach of the G.P.U. And even the most perfervid friend of Communism will admit that in Russia it pays to say the right thing, especially in public. No independent witness—safe from victimisation—was available to support the improbable charges that five nations had been conspiring together to wage war upon the Soviet State. Not one single person in any one of these countries concerned—England, France, Poland, Rumania, Finland—has come forward to admit the existence of these prolonged preparations for intervention. Yet surely, if they existed, they must have been known to many?

On the contrary, every foreigner named in the indictment has protested that the whole story is false. Thus Monsieur Poincaré declared: "Whether Professor Ramzin and the other members of the Industrial Party have conspired against the Government of their country I neither know nor care. At all events, I repeat that, even if such a plot was begun, not a soul in France was involved."

The Committee of the Russian Trade, Industrial and Financial Association (*Torgprom*) which was mentioned as being in the forefront of the plot, issued a *manifesto* declaring that all the statements

connecting its members with the defendants were "false without exception," and adding that it "never at any time conducted negotiations with the defendants, never arranged any meetings with them whatever, never furnished them with any subsidies or entered into any relationship with them." "This evidence," declared the Committee, "has either been fabricated by the agents of the G.P.U. or extorted from the defendants by torture."

Yet if, in fact, neither the French General Staff nor the *Torgprom* conducted negotiations with Ramzin and Fedotov for armed intervention, what becomes of the whole rigmarole of charges contained in the confessions?

If, on the other hand, the testimony of the accused is accepted, it must also be accepted that not only the French Government, but the British Government, was prepared to embark upon an armed conflict which would inevitably have involved all Europe, and to embark upon that conflict upon no higher moral ground than their alleged desire to destroy the Soviet State in the interests of international capitalism.

Faced with these conflicting theories, most impartial minds will remember the total absence of any shred of independent evidence proving the existence of an "interventionalist plot," and decide that at least that part of the testimony of the defendants had no foundation in fact.

In support of this conclusion, it may be remarked that over and over again, in the course of the cross-examination, when one of the prisoners was suddenly faced with an unexpected question concerning meetings with intriguers in Paris or London, these men—who testified so freely and in such wealth of detail in the "confessions"—had no answer ready. Krylenko himself alluded to these hesitations in the closing speech for the prosecution and saw in them evidence that the accused, especially Ramzin, were ashamed or afraid to speak of some things. Can anyone who has read the abject confessions of guilt in this chapter regard it as probable that the same men would be "ashamed" to confess having received money from abroad for the purpose of continuing their sabotage against Soviet industry? Is not a more probable explanation to be found in the fact that they had a prepared and rehearsed part to play, with the promise of their lives if they played it well, and for this reason they hesitated to reply to unexpected questions lest they should reveal flaws in the carefully constructed edifice of words? I do not say that is the explanation—I conjecture it might well prove to be so. Only the higher officials of the G.P.U. could give the world the truth.

Assuming that the "war plot" never existed, what of the other charges of sabotage and the like? And what of the good faith of the defendants?

Several possible explanations may be advanced to solve the riddle. That these eight men, belonging to the intelligentsia, had been engaged in acts of economic "sabotage" is not in itself inherently



A SECTION OF THE AUDIENCE AT A STAGE-MANAGED MOSCOW TRIAL
Proletarians eagerly follow the evidence against Professor Ramzin and other leaders of the alleged
"interventionist plot."

improbable, if only because sabotage is a word which, in Russia, covers a multitude of sins, from the physical destruction of buildings and machinery to mere stupidity or bad luck, even, on the part of those organising the industrial development. It is within the realm of possibility that the "Industrial Party" leaders, when abroad, were not averse from discussing the prospects of organising a rebellion against the Soviet power with Russian exiles or even with foreigners. And it is not impossible to conceive that those same counter-revolutionaries and foreigners might have claimed influence with the French and other Governments which they did not, in fact, possess. They may even have reported to Ramzin discussions with the military authorities which never took place. Such things have happened before in the history of the world.

In that event, the prisoners, in confessing their crimes, would only be confessing what they honestly believed to be the truth. Certainly Ramzin and company were not in a position to check any statement. They did not talk with the French General Staff, or with Mr. Baldwin's Secretary of State for War, or with the Imperial General Staff. Whatever they knew or thought they knew, it was only second-hand knowledge. No one who is conversant with the activities of the White Russian groups in exile will doubt the probability of some attempt being made to establish regular relations with this group of Soviet intellectuals who may have exaggerated the power of their organisation within that country, and the possibilities of a successful rising.

There remains one further hypothetical explanation, the most likely one of all. This is that the eight prisoners had in fact been guilty of economic espionage, industrial sabotage and working against the interests of the Government they were paid to serve. Their opposition being discovered, and their arrests following, the G.P.U. was in a position to utilise their crimes to stage, not a small internal trial, but a great propagandist trial, a *coup de convenance* in the interests of the Soviet Government, and they brought pressure to bear upon the prisoners to that end. The eight men, realising the perilous nature of their plight, and also the dark possibilities looming up for their families, sought to save both their own lives and the liberty of those they loved by accepting the parts arranged for them. And so the world was treated to a piece of fantastic and typically cruel propaganda designed for internal consumption and possible only in a country where people remember that Yudenitch, Denikin and Kolchak were supported by the Allies, and that British troops fought on Russian soil against the present rulers of their land.

"All the circumstances and surroundings of the trial show that one of its objects has been to stimulate anti-foreign feeling," declared *The Times*, after the death sentences had been pronounced. "The main purpose, however, there can be no doubt, has been to provide scape-goats for popular discontent and to counter the efforts of those,

within and without the ranks of the Communist Party, who are striving to bring about a modification of policy and a change of leadership."

"Insulated" from the outside world by a complete censorship, the Russian people do not know how radically political conditions in Western Europe have changed since 1920, and so they followed the trial with the strained attention of people who have been saved from a bloody campaign for the defence of their nation.

Easy as it is to say that the Russian people were fooled, and that the French press was right when it declared that the trial was "a piece of cynical play-acting without parallel in the history of nations," it seems probable that some sort of opposition to the régime may have existed among the members of the so-called "Industrial Party." Some of the best-informed foreign observers who were present at the trial refuse to accept unreservedly the view that the whole proceedings were based upon the need for propaganda material and nothing else.

"It is doubtful whether any eye-witness of the trial would credit *a priori* the theory of foreign anti-Soviet quarters that the confessions and testimony were extorted by torture from innocent people," stated the Moscow correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, reviewing the trial in retrospect. "To have compelled four professors and four engineers, men well above the average in culture and education, supported by a number of witnesses of corresponding professional attainments, to accuse themselves falsely day after day before a large audience would have been beyond the power of the most tyrannical Government. One gained the impression that the hold of the prosecution on the defendants rested on something stronger and subtler than physical duress. Quite possibly two factors may have entered into the situation—consciousness of guilt combined with hope, ultimately fulfilled, that a properly humble and repentant attitude, which would be duly advertised all over the Soviet Union through a talking film, would ensure the remission of the extreme penalty. In any case it was a distinctly tame group of *saboteurs* who were produced for the edification of the proletarian audience."

And the same writer adds: "It was perhaps doubtful whether the sabotage was as serious as Soviet headlines about the trial would lead one to believe. As the defendants described it, it largely assumed such forms as the faulty planning of future output and the preparation of poor building projects. So much of this sort of thing goes on anyway in Russia that they may have been only carrying coals to Newcastle. . . . That French agents should have attempted to utilise disgruntled intellectuals as a source of military and economic information is not inherently improbable. This aspect of the trial was discussed in a secret court session. On the other hand the weakest spot in the prosecution's case seemed to be the effort to prove

the existence of an interventionist plot, with France playing the leading rôle."

If, as I consider probable, these men were guilty of sabotage, and perhaps of futile "plotting" with nonentities abroad who pretended to possess influence they never had, then the fact that they were willing parties to the task of making a mountain out of a mole-hill for the delectation of the Soviet public in order to escape the death penalty for sabotage, need occasion no surprise.

Nor will those in touch with the situation within the U.S.S.R. at that date feel any amazement at the fact that the Soviet managers saw the possibility, by setting up these "plotters" as Aunt Sallies to be knocked down by Soviet justice, of providing their people with something to think about and a rallying point for their loyalty to the régime. The possibilities of the situation must have been very tempting to men who have been prophesying a capitalist war upon Russia, year in and year out.

But that the Soviet Government really attached any serious importance to the great "Industrial Party" plot, or was ever likely to be seriously inconvenienced or endangered by the activities of these *saboteurs*, may be dismissed as absurd.

Whatever view is accepted concerning the truth in this matter, it is obvious that the trial enabled Stalin and his colleagues to spend eleven days in Wonderland, contemplating imaginary dangers as a relief from those of more substance. And it also remains true that in forcing these men, several of them old in years, to participate in all the mockery of a propagandist trial for their lives, the Soviet Government was guilty of an unjustified act of terrorism.

It may be added that, both before and during the trial, M. Bessiedowsky and M. Dmitrievsky, former Soviet diplomatic officials abroad, declared that they had secured information from Moscow which established the fact that Professor Ramzin, in his relations with the other prisoners, had carried out the rôle of *agent provocateur* of the Soviet Government. If this is so, it explains news which reached me shortly after the trial that Ramzin was released after only a few weeks' imprisonment and has since moved freely in various parts of the U.S.S.R.

CHAPTER IX

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

"Acquiescence is not freedom; nor is it a passable substitute for freedom, as dictators argue."

C. DELISLE BURNS.

It is probable that, when the whole story of the activities of the G.P.U., the Secret Political Police organisation on which has descended the mantle of the Czarist *Ochrana*, comes to be written, it will be found that most of the reports concerning the all-embracing, and almost inhuman, efficiency of this force have been much exaggerated.

Even the official Soviet pronouncements upon recent events in Russia, if we accept them as true, cannot be reconciled with the vision of the all-seeing, never-sleeping guardians of the Soviet State conjured up by newspaper reports emanating from anti-Soviet circles. Thus, the charges of counter-revolutionary activity, extending over a period of years, brought against the members of the "Industrial Party" at the trial discussed in the preceding chapter, implied that, during all that time, the G.P.U. had remained in ignorance while a counter-revolutionary organisation, aiming at the overthrow of the Soviet State, was being perfected within the Soviet Union itself.

It is now known that the Czarist secret police organisation was so inefficient and bungling as to be laughable when viewed as a detective force. It gained its results by the aid of traitors and the use of the *agent provocateur*, methods rightly discouraged in countries where the purity of justice is regarded as more important than securing convictions. It is certain that the *Ochrana* punished the innocent as often as it permitted the guilty to escape, but its punitive expeditions were so thorough and its methods of punishment so ruthless that up to the end it managed to maintain, even among revolutionaries, some sort of reputation for efficiency.

In the organisation of the Cheka, and later of the G.P.U., the Soviet Government followed faithfully in the footsteps of Czardom, but the greater number of enthusiasts for the Communist creed, the iron discipline now imposed upon the whole Russian nation, and the more extensive use of the *agent provocateur* have enabled the G.P.U. to achieve a higher standard of efficiency than the *Ochrana* ever attained.

The feature of both these forces has been their unquestioning obedience to the régime which they served. The spectacle of an *Ochrana*-man comforting a lost child surprised a friend of mine who visited pre-war Russia. "How could an official of so ruthless a force be so human and gentle with a child?" he asked. It is not necessary to assume that all agents of the G.P.U. are monsters in human shape to understand the rôle that they have played in Russia since 1917. I have met many members of the force and have found them, without exception, kindly, human and courteous. Only when politics—or,

as a Communist would express it, the safety of the Workers' State—is in question, does the G.P.U. become the cold, ruthless, pitiless, avenging machine. Every loyal G.P.U.-man would send his own wife into exile if that lady criticised the régime he is paid to protect.

It naturally follows that, in the G.P.U., more than in any other department of the State, the theory that the end justifies the means, finds unquestioning acceptance, and governs many of the methods which have lent notoriety to its activities.

The G.P.U. use the *agent provocateur* not only occasionally but systematically and continuously. During early years, the force recruited its army of spies by the method hallowed by the Czarist *Ochrana*—by giving to political prisoners the choice of becoming an *agent*, or execution. An investigation at one Moscow prison revealed the fact that, during three months ending February, 1921, no less than half the inmates of the prison were approached by Cheka officials with a proposal that they should secure their release by becoming spies of the police. In more than half these cases it was made clear that the alternative was execution.

To-day, it is said, every perfervid Communist, at home and abroad, is a G.P.U. official—pledged by his creed to supply the authorities with information concerning the political opinions of his friends, relatives and acquaintances, and to report faithfully on any matter regarding which the G.P.U. may need information. The G.P.U. has its *agents* in every hotel, office and public place, and the same system of *Informateurs* exists abroad for the purpose of supplying information concerning the behaviour and conduct of Soviet officials in foreign countries, and about *émigrés*.

All this is common knowledge. Less well known are the methods employed by the G.P.U. for the discovery of plots against the Soviet.

There exist outside Russia many groups and forces which frankly admit they would be glad to see the end of the Communist régime and who, it may safely be assumed, would not refuse to hasten a collapse by any means which offered the hope of success.

Knowledge of the opinions, actions and intentions of these groups is considered essential to the defence of the Soviet State. Even when police reports conveying the results of normal methods of surveillance, reveal no anti-Soviet activity, Moscow continues to feel uneasy, as is perhaps natural in a country where the "spy bogey" and the "*saboteur*" have been elevated by fantastic trials into the proportions of a national danger.

The G.P.U., when faced with a complete lack of evidence implicating any group or individuals in anti-Soviet activity, employs another method to secure the raw material for propaganda against the *bourgeois* Governments, international capitalists and "Whites"—the unholy Trinity of the Soviet posters. It plans the organisation, outside Russia, of a "plot" against the Soviet régime by one of its

own *agents provocateurs*. Most of the "plots" reported from Moscow from time to time have been organised in this way by the G.P.U. for its own purposes.¹

Such a "plot" was the explanation of the disappearance from Paris, a few years ago, of M. Schulgin, a monarchist and former member of the Duma.

For six months none of his friends had news of him. Then he reappeared and it was rumoured in *émigré* circles that he had succeeded in getting into Russia and out again. Confirmation of the report came when shortly after Schulgin published a book giving his impressions of life under the Soviets, entitled *My Visit to Soviet Russia*, an informative and interesting study which contained evidence that this former monarchist had, in fact, succeeded in running the Soviet blockade.

In this book Schulgin described, in all seriousness, the precautions taken by his guide to smuggle him across the frontier, the inns at which they stayed, and the method by which he got out of the country again. Only later did it become known that the "guide" who had thus escorted him in and out of Russia in safety was an agent of the G.P.U.

The aim of the Soviet police in allowing and staging this visit was to uncover some of the threads of the monarchist organisation which they believed to exist in Russia. They hoped that Schulgin would attempt to establish contact with monarchist sympathisers and thus expose them, with the aid of the pseudo-monarchist of the G.P.U., who remained at his side throughout the journey.

The ruse was, up to a point, successful. Although Schulgin was shrewd enough not to attempt to get in touch with any well-known or suspected monarchist sympathisers, shortly after his journey certain arrests were made.

Evidently the G.P.U. was satisfied with the result, for the episode of Schulgin is closely connected with a more important "plot" which was hatched at about the same time at the G.P.U. headquarters in the Lubianka at Moscow—the organisation of the so-called monarchist "Trust."

Agents provocateurs of the G.P.U. abroad organised this monarchist organisation on a large scale among ex-officers of the Czarist Army, the declared aim being to get into contact with the monarchist organisation which existed in Russia—as Schulgin's visit had proved. Contact having been established, this counter-revolutionary organisation was to be supplied with literature, arms and men as occasion offered, until a plan could be perfected to organise a revolt against the régime.

The planning of this amazing "coup" occupied three years, during the whole of which time the members of the "Trust" had

¹ That this is so is proved by the confessions of many ex-members of the G.P.U., including Agabekov.

not the slightest suspicion that they were working under the direct control of the G.P.U.

"Agents" of the Trust were sent to Russia. They got in and out safely without harm or question—the G.P.U. taking care that none of its local officials upset their carefully-laid plans. Supplies of counter-revolutionary literature, and even small consignments of firearms were sent into Russia, and often reached their destination.

During the preliminary stages of the plot, a few arrests were made in Russia, these arrests being in the nature of an *alibi* on the part of the G.P.U., proving that it had no knowledge of, or connection with, the wide ramifications of the plan in hand.

The plan was nearing completion when, by chance, it was discovered that one of the original founders of the "Trust" was an *agent provocateur* of the G.P.U. And only then, after careful investigation, was it discovered that the whole organisation had been planned by the G.P.U., which had also facilitated the passage into Russia of literature, ammunition, men and material.

The aim of the police in staging this remarkable affair is quite clear. The Soviet Government and the revolutionary Tribunals thrive on plots against the Communist State. These plots, as the great stage-managed trials of recent years have shown, are invaluable as propaganda for the defence of the State. By "uncovering" the great "Trust plot" at the moment when it was ready to strike, the Russian Government would have been able to hold it up to the people as an example of the urgent need to "guard the revolution day and night," and of the determination of the monarchists to wreck the State.

In the absence of any monarchist activity against Communism at that time, it was necessary to "manufacture" it abroad and then to import it into Russia. The deception of Schulgin, who had returned to Paris believing that there were the beginnings of a swing away from Communism, was a necessary first step to securing the co-operation of Czarist officers and other prominent monarchists in the "plot."

Another amazing chapter of the underground history of Communism, in which the *agents provocateurs* played their part, was the surrender, trial and death of Boris Savinkov.

If any man can be said to have shaken the iron hold of Communism upon Russia since 1917, that man was Boris Savinkov.

A Socialist-Revolutionary since student days, leading member of a terrorist organisation and direct organiser of the pre-war assassinations of de Plehve and the Grand Duke Serge, Savinkov was one of the outstanding personalities of revolutionary Russia—the acknowledged master of the arts of revolutionary activity.

He had achieved a name as novelist and poet, but Savinkov was above all else a man of action and particularly underground action, and it was in that realm that he achieved his greatest successes. During the Great War, he joined the ranks of the Socialists who

supported the war, and following the March revolution of 1917, he became Under-Secretary for War in the Kerensky Government, and attained a certain authority among the army command by his advocacy of military discipline at a time when Russia was already in danger of crumbling into dissolution and chaos.

His desire for quick, decisive action and his strong will and dynamic energy caused him to grow impatient with the vacillations by which Kerensky sought to save Russia from further violence, and even while in office under the Provisional Government Savinkov was plotting with General Kornilov to overthrow the Provisional Government and form a strong Military Government until immediate dangers had been overcome.

This man—an adventurer and plotter by nature—saw the failure of that plot and the fall of Kerensky. Later, he joined hands with the monarchists and led expeditions against the Soviet power.

When these attempts to overthrow the Soviet régime ended in failure, Savinkov came to London, where he met Mr. Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, and Mr. Churchill, who has described this greatest of all counter-revolutionaries as the "essence of practicability and good sense expressed in terms of nitro-glycerine."¹

His record as a revolutionary (he was in exile when the revolution set him free) and his outstanding personality, together with his ruthless energy, his personal courage and his passionate belief in Russian freedom—all these factors made him an opponent whom the Soviet Government feared more than any other. Early in his period of exile, after the conclusion of the civil war, the Cheka was sending its *agents provocateurs* to Savinkov's house in the effort to entice this dynamic and dangerous opponent back into the Soviet net. But Savinkov knew the game too well. He recognised his visitors for Cheka-men, brushed aside their protestations of undying devotion to the cause of strong government, and stayed where he was.

Still the Cheka refused to believe that the great Savinkov would accept the Communist Dictatorship without an attempt to overthrow it. They persevered with their efforts. In doing so, they were pursuing a perfectly logical course, for Savinkov, though formerly a Socialist and revolutionary, had become a focusing point of opposition to the Soviet régime, and the bitterest enemy Communism had to face.

During the period of his exile, a notable feature of which was the close friendship which developed between this "White" adventurer and Marshal Pilsudski, Savinkov was steadily planning an organisation within Russia which would direct a rising against the dictatorship. There is more than a suspicion that he even won over some of the Cheka *agents* who came to him in London and Paris, knowing them to be spies of the Soviets. If this fact is true, it provides an

¹ *The World Crisis*, (Vol. V), page 78.

explanation, otherwise lacking, for the dramatic events which led up to his death.

Savinkov became more and more disappointed with the *émigrés* among whom he moved during his months in exile. They possessed no leader, no driving force, no organisation that counted ; there was nothing to hope for from them. Neither could he expect further help in overthrowing the Bolsheviks from Lloyd George or even Churchill. In the bitterness of disillusionment, he once exclaimed : " I cannot walk among the shades of dead men, or talk with men without souls."

He saw more hope of overthrowing Bolshevism in the relations which he had maintained with certain opponents of the régime who were his personal admirers. Deliberately he counted the cost, and came to the decision that, if he could succeed in establishing himself in the U.S.S.R., in any circumstances and at whatever risk, he would be the one man who, thanks to his reputation, could, when the moment came to strike, rely upon support both in Russia and abroad.

Savinkov used every force going in his direction ; he had been working with monarchists, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and all other Socialist groups. All knew him, and all would be more likely to give him their support—as would Pilsudski—if he were in Russia than if he remained a mere plotter in the ranks of the *émigrés* in Paris or Berlin.

Faced with this problem, Boris Savinkov came to his decision—the most dramatic decision made by any opponent of Communism in the past ten years—to return to Moscow, openly and without disguise, for the avowed purpose of sooner or later firing the spark which would bring the Russian dictatorship toppling to the ground. In 1923, Russian exiles learnt with amazement that Savinkov, most dreaded enemy of the Soviets, had been arrested on the Russian frontier, and had made a statement to the Cheka expressing his desire to be taken to Moscow for the purpose of making a full confession of his counter-revolutionary activities to the Soviet Government.

The official Soviet version of this episode, and that stated publicly by Savinkov himself, both agreed in essentials—that he was trying to enter Russia illegally, was arrested by the authorities and sent to Moscow, where he desired to confess before an open tribunal his activities against the Russian Government, and also reveal what he knew concerning the plots which were being organised by the Imperialist and capitalist Governments abroad against the régime.

To everyone who knew Boris Savinkov it was evident that the whole story had not been revealed—that there was some sort of plot or agreement behind these events. Here the secrecy enshrouding monarchist and anti-Communist activities at that time makes it difficult to speak definitely of the real reason for his voluntary return to the land of his enemies. It has since been proved that Savinkov's return to Russia was organised by the G.P.U. through *agents*

provocateurs, and there is no reasonable doubt that Savinkov himself understood perfectly well beforehand the object of this solicitude on the part of the Russian authorities.

Those who knew him well conjectured that, before he returned, Savinkov had made a definite agreement with the Soviet authorities that, in return for his evidence against those with whom he had been associating outside, he would receive a light prison sentence and, later, be granted a minor post in a Government department. This promise gave birth to the hope—according to this version—that in time he might be in a position of freedom which would enable him to prepare an organisation having for its aim the overthrow of the Government.

If, in fact, this was Savinkov's object, it was a desperate gamble—how desperate he must have known better than anyone else. It appears more probable that this experienced revolutionary, who had known well the character and temper of the Communist leaders in the past, did not rely upon the G.P.U. keeping to any bargain they might make to allow him eventual liberty, but that he certainly hoped, after he had made a dramatic and highly useful confession at his trial, that his life would be spared. Probably he counted upon his wits to allow him to escape from prison or exile, or even to continue his plotting from inside prison.

If the motives animating Savinkov are obscure, the aims of the Cheka were evident. First, to discredit one of the leading anti-Bolshevik leaders. Second, to stage a trial which would supply for all the world ample proof of foreign Imperialist intrigues against the Soviet Union. For who could dispute proofs offered by a man who had admittedly been in close and constant contact with international capitalism and an intriguer against his country?

Having secured that evidence, the Cheka planned to grant Savinkov his life, and eventually to dispose of him, after a suitable interval, by one of their usual methods for quietly ridding themselves of inconvenient prisoners.

All this Savinkov knew. He had reckoned the cost. But he hoped that, while he had life, he would one day outwit those who watched him. He counted on one thing—that, after the world-interest in his trial and confession, the Soviet Government would not take the last step of all. And in that calculation he made the mistake which was to cost him his life.

Because various reports have been circulated by interested persons from time to time since 1923, it may be well to record here that there is no possibility whatever that Savinkov returned to Russia because he had changed his opinions, repented, or embraced the Communist creed.

The trial was staged with the usual pomp and publicity shortly after Savinkov had reached Moscow. And on the day before the prisoner was to make his speech of confession the authorities paid to

the personality of Savinkov the greatest tribute ever paid by Communism to an opponent—they drafted additional regiments of the Red Army into Moscow lest at the eleventh hour Savinkov's sympathisers should attempt his rescue.

No prisoner at the bar of Soviet justice has ever made so profound an impression upon a packed court as did Savinkov when he rose to condemn himself before the world. In the course of a long and carefully prepared speech, he outlined in the greatest detail the intrigues of the capitalist Governments of Europe, interviews he had had with Mr. Churchill and others, what help he had received in his anti-Bolshevik plots, how he had raised the money to finance them—in short, the whole record of his activities while in exile, and in contact with the leading statesmen of Europe.

The statement rang true. Assuming that it was true, it almost approached treachery, so complete was the breach of confidence involved in this exposure of the most secret conversations with Ministers and others prominent in European affairs.

The statement skilfully led up to two conclusions: that Savinkov now believed that the capitalist Governments were corrupt and had been using him for their own purposes, for which reason he could not agree to play any further part in their intrigues, and that the Bolshevik State was a just and reputable Government, representative of the Russian people.

In reviewing this amazing "confession" one fact must be stated in Savinkov's favour. Assuming that the speech was in fact true, he was careful to confine his betrayal of confidence to people that the Russian Government could not touch. In the whole of his evidence he dealt only with the statesmen and *émigrés* from whom he could expect no further assistance and who had disappointed him. He incriminated no one upon whom the Communists could lay their hands.

Bearing in mind the evidence contained in earlier chapters of the readiness of the Revolutionary Tribunal to impose the death sentence for the smallest offence against the State, it caused much surprise when it became known that the Public Prosecutor did not ask for the death sentence to be passed upon the prisoner—in itself strong evidence that some prior agreement existed on the punishment to be inflicted.

Savinkov was condemned to a term of imprisonment in the Butirki Prison at Moscow.

In his speech before the Court, he had offered—should his life be granted to him—to serve the Soviet cause in any capacity, however small, when he had expiated his crime. Alas for whatever hopes Boris Savinkov may have had! Eighteen months later, the Soviet authorities announced that the prisoner Savinkov, greatest of Russian plotters of his generation, had committed suicide by flinging himself out of the window of his cell. Thus passed the one man the Soviets feared.

Although it is impossible to obtain direct evidence on the manner in which he met his death, no one who had any knowledge of Savinkov's extraordinarily strong-willed, determined, persistent and optimistic nature believes him to have been capable of suicide. At the time of his death he was, ostensibly, within six months of the date of his release. And the material possibilities of suicide may also be questioned. It is virtually impossible for anyone to kill himself by jumping from the window of a Russian prison, for all windows are not only narrow and small, but heavily barred.

If, on the other hand, it is assumed in the face of all the available evidence that Savinkov did commit suicide, this suggests that the Cheka did not intend to keep their bargain to restore his freedom at the end of his term of imprisonment, and that Savinkov knew this.

How otherwise explain the self-destruction of a man who had risked so much in order to secure his own freedom of movement within Russia—if only for a few months?

But here we enter the realm of conjecture, for the Cheka, and their successors, the G.P.U., keep their secrets well. And the world may wait long to learn the true facts concerning the death of Boris Savinkov—the master-revolutionary—in a Soviet prison house, six months before he had hoped to challenge the Communist régime.

Equally wrapped in mystery, but with greater hope of solution, is the disappearance of the "White" leader, General Koutepoff, reported to the Paris police in February, 1930.

Koutepoff had been a famous military figure in Czarist Russia, and during the civil war had taken an active part in the "White" movement, later becoming the right-hand man of General Wrangel during the operations in South Russia.

After the failure of the "White" offensive, Koutepoff assisted in the evacuation of the monarchist troops from the Crimea to Constantinople, where he gave valuable support to Wrangel in the task of maintaining some sort of military discipline in the devastated and disheartened ranks of the exiled army. Upon the death of Wrangel, Koutepoff became the acknowledged head of the anti-Soviet military organisation outside Russia, and it is no secret that he devoted much time to planning coups against the Bolsheviks—coups which were never to be carried out.

One morning in February, 1930, General Koutepoff left the house where he was living in Paris to attend service at the Russian church. He never returned.

As the hours passed, his wife became troubled; his secretary also, for the General was very punctilious in his habits and never went anywhere without informing his wife. When night came without any news, Madame Koutepoff notified the police.

Investigations were set on foot and evidence was obtained which, shadowy and vague though it was, pointed unerringly to the fact that

the disappearance of Koutepoff was due, not to loss of memory or any of those reasons for which men sometimes disappear, but to a political kidnapping plot, carried out in the heart of the French capital under the very noses of the *gendarmes* patrolling the streets.

Two witnesses certified that they saw, at the probable time of the kidnapping, a powerful motor-car standing with its engine running not far from Koutepoff's house, while just round the corner was a taxi, also with its engine running. There was one woman and three men seated in the larger car, and other men standing beside it. While the two witnesses had the car under observation a man answering the description of the missing General approached, whereupon the group around the car engaged him in conversation. A few minutes later, the General—if Koutepoff it was—entered the waiting car with two of the men, the balance of the party entered the taxi, and the two vehicles drove off.

The witnesses were emphatic that nothing occurred to arouse their suspicions. There was no struggle, no shout for assistance. Further, one of the group wore the uniform of the French police—although it was later proved that no member of the police force was present in that street at that time.

From the moment when the two cars drove away, all trace of them was lost. Despite every effort, the French *Sûreté Generale* had to admit themselves beaten.

Some weeks later, fresh evidence came from the coast of Normandy. It was reported that a car answering the description given by the witnesses in Paris had been seen there. The marks of a tyre and footprints were discovered in one of the most desolate spots on the coast. Further investigation on this new trail produced witnesses who declared that they had seen a strange boat waiting near the spot where the tyre marks were discovered and a group of men who answered to the description given by the Paris witnesses, carrying something heavy over the rocks. There the trail ended. From that day to this nothing further has ever been discovered concerning one of the most baffling mysteries of recent years.

How did Koutepoff meet his end? From the very beginning of the investigations, one theory put forward in high quarters was that the General had been kidnapped by Bolshevik agents. According to this theoretical reconstruction of the mystery, Koutepoff, who was known to be in touch with certain people in Russia, was approached by a pseudo-monarchist who was in reality an *agent provocateur* of the G.P.U., and who enticed him into the car under the promise of taking him to see some important men living in Paris. Once in the car, the General was chloroformed and driven to the coast, there to be placed on board a Soviet steamer by pre-arranged plan and taken to Leningrad.

Private investigations undertaken by M. Boutzev, a Russian politician who exposed many *agents provocateurs* of the *Ochrana*,

including the famous Azev, the terrorist in the service of the Czarist police, have led him to advance the following probable solution.

The whole affair was planned by the G.P.U. some time before the alleged kidnapping occurred. So important did they consider it to remove Koutepoff that they brought agents from Berlin and Moscow to Paris, in order that there should be no possibility of the General knowing the *agents provocateurs* entrusted to carry out the crime.

These agents of the G.P.U. succeeded in convincing the General that they were really what they pretended to be—monarchists. On the day planned for the disappearance they met the General unexpectedly, lured him into the car upon some pretext, took advantage of a quiet road to chloroform him and, unfortunately for their plans, gave him an overdose, causing his death. For it is known that Koutepoff had a very weak heart, a circumstance which, according to this version of events, upset all their calculations.

The fact that their prisoner was dead was only discovered when they were taking the body out of the car on the Normandy coast to transport it to the waiting steamer. A hurried council was held. Obviously the body could not be taken on board, for the boat might be inspected at some port *en route* for Leningrad. Had Koutepoff been alive, he would have been merely a "political prisoner" being taken back to Russia. But a dead body, with the hue and cry likely to be raised over the disappearance of the General and the risk of incriminating the Soviet Government in the matter, caused a hurried change of plan. The steamer proceeded on her voyage, and the body of Koutepoff was replaced in the car, driven off and buried somewhere in France.

If this reconstruction of the mystery is accepted, it follows that Koutepoff's death was unexpected, and that his body may one day be discovered.

M. Boutzev proposes to publish the detailed confession of a Soviet *agent provocateur*, upon which this solution of the crime is based, as soon as his informant is safe from any retaliatory action on the part of the Russian Government.

CHAPTER X

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

"The glorification of the State, and the doctrine that it is every citizen's duty to serve the State, are radically against progress and against liberty. The State though at present a source of much evil, is also a means of certain good things, and will be needed so long as violent and destructive impulses remain common. But it is *merely* a means, and a means which needs to be very carefully and sparingly used if it is not to do more harm than good. . . . It is the individual in whom all that is good must be realised, and the free growth of the individual must be the supreme end of a political system which is to re-fashion the world."

BERTRAND RUSSELL in *Roads to Freedom*.

"DEFEND the Workers' State!" shouts the Soviet propagandist. "Relax your efforts for an instant, and the capitalists will pour their mercenaries, their guns and their poison gas across the frontiers to destroy the land where the proletariat rule."

"Your talk is of abstract principles, remote from the problems we must face every minute of every day," said a Soviet official to me when I had enquired why those opposed to the Communist creed were not allowed to seek the votes of the Russian people, and by what right all opposition was suppressed by violent methods. "To us there is something more important than *bourgeois* liberty (which is not liberty at all), or votes, or free debate. The supreme duty which devolves upon us as the custodians of Russia is to preserve the victories won by the revolution. Nothing else matters."

The analysis of the basis of Soviet law, and the record of violence, beginning in 1917 and continuing in 1931, contained in previous chapters, even though by no means complete, reveal with what thoroughness the Soviet régime has discharged its task of defending the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

The events of the past fourteen years prove that terror as a system of government and the complete denial of personal liberty are necessary requisites of the Soviet State, without which it could not exist.

Many democrats who sympathised with the aims of the Russian revolution, and whose sympathies were not completely extinguished even by the violent overthrow of the Constituent Assembly by the victorious Leninists, regarded the terrorist methods of 1917-20 as a passing phase—one that was even justified at a time when the new Government was called upon to defend its existence against the encircling forces of reaction, foreign intervention and banditry.

Terror, it was pointed out, is the hand-maiden of revolution. Was it not so in the French revolution?

With the passing of the years, a new factor emerged. It was seen that the Terror was not a passing phase; that the Russian dictatorship had adopted violence as a permanent weapon for the defence of the State.

Violence, both thinly veiled as "class justice" and undisguised, has now been for fourteen years a recognised and freely used method of maintaining the Soviet State in power, and, as the examples quoted in these pages show, though during that time its forms have changed, its systematic and ruthless application in the interests of the Government has continued unchecked.

The Communists justify the continuance of the Second Terror during years containing no major threat to the régime by pointing out that, both within Russia and without, there exist enemies of the State seeking an opportunity of overwhelming the revolutionary forces and restoring, if not a monarchy, at least a capitalistic-democratic régime in Russia.

They charge foreign Governments—particularly the Governments of France, Poland, Finland and, to a lesser degree, Britain—with constant plotting against the existence of the Soviet State. They declare that, sooner or later, the international capitalists will wage war upon the Workers' State, because the economic successes of that State will force them to either destroy it or be destroyed themselves. Hence the feverish increase in armaments which has been a prominent feature of the policy of a Government which preaches the brotherhood of all the toiling masses the world over.

Everyone possessing even a superficial knowledge of conditions in Western Europe to-day knows that such a war as the Russians profess to fear—a war of aggression upon the Communist State—is not only improbable, but impossible. No Government—French, Polish or other—would be mad enough to contemplate such a hazard however antagonistic to the Communist creed, at a time when Europe is immersed in economic difficulties and debt problems which will take a generation to solve. Never was there a time, moreover, when public opinion throughout Europe was so determined that war shall not happen again.

It is, I think, reasonable to assume that the diplomats of the Soviet Commissariat for Foreign Affairs are well acquainted with these facts. If they remain unconvinced, it is because certain groups outside Russia continue to issue threats against the régime, and to flirt with the idea of an interventionist war which they know quite well is impossible. In this fact may be found some justification for the propaganda issued in Russia for internal purposes, but is any Government, in a position to assess the shallowness of these empty threats, justified in using them as an excuse for continuing a reign of terror within its own frontiers?

Communists further justify the continuance of repressive measures by the existence of internal plots against the Government.

That courageous opponents of the régime do conduct a perilous system of underground propaganda and attempt to maintain their organisation within the Soviet Union, especially among former members of the banned Socialist Parties, may be admitted. But in



**ПОБЕДНОГО ШЕСТВИЯ
ПЯТИЛЕТКИ
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ИМПЕРИАЛИСТАМ!**

A SOVIET POSTER INTENDED TO JUSTIFY THE FEAR OF A CAPITALIST
WAR AGAINST RUSSIA

It depicts the figure of international capitalism encouraging Poland, France and reactionary Europe to attack the "Workers' State."

view of the fact that, even if the accuracy of every statement issued by the G.P.U. is accepted, not one single example of military plotting has been disclosed in Russia since the days of the civil war, can the continued executions and the endless sentences to exile be justified? Can the fact that a common criminal receives better treatment than a political offender be excused? Can the penalising of a citizen for expressing his opinion of the Government under which he lives be defended?

Accepting the evidence of the Soviet Courts on the trend of educated opinion in Russia during recent years, it is clear that the growing number of trials in which the prisoners are drawn from those holding executive posts in the industrial organisation shows that there is, after fourteen years, an evident and widespread dissatisfaction with the Soviet Government and its system—a dissatisfaction which, again accepting the Government reports of constant sabotage as correct, does not diminish and is growing from year to year.

Has any Government the right to deny all legal means of expressing this dissatisfaction and then punish it as a crime against the State? The Soviet Government, by suppressing all freedom of speech, conscience and assembly, leaves those who disagree with its policies no method of expression but underground plotting. In these circumstances, if plots exist, the entire responsibility belongs to the dictatorship which suppresses political freedom by violence.

It seems probable, unfortunately, that as long as the Soviet Government holds its present views the terrorist activities of its watch-dogs will continue undiminished.

Inseparable from that policy of violence is the infliction of terrible punishments upon innocent persons. Of that there can be no doubt. Leaving aside the injustices of "class justice," it is clear that, by preserving the death penalty for political offences—which in Czarist days the Bolshevik Party fiercely assailed although it was then only inflicted during periods of martial law—and endowing their police with the power to execute without trial or without any of the safeguards which surround the use of the supreme penalty in Western countries, the Soviet Government has, however sincere its intentions, propounded the theory that all the decisions of the G.P.U. are infallible.

Remembering that judicial errors are not unknown in those lands where the law most strictly protects the individual from punishment for a crime of which he is innocent, can it be doubted that terrible and irretrievable miscarriages of justice have occurred in Russia, and will continue to occur as long as the present powers of the State over the individual remain unaltered?

The denial of liberty has forced the rulers of the Russian State into a vicious circle, from which there is no escape. So long as the Soviet Government aims at moulding public opinion on Communist lines, and tolerating no other creed but the creed of Stalin, it must

have recourse to methods of terror to exterminate the opinions of its opponents. If it allowed other opinions to become vocal, its hold on Russia would immediately weaken. Discipline would relax, with serious results for an administration controlling every department of public life of 160,000,000 of people, and the whole structure of Communist development, which is based upon complete unity of opinion and unquestioning obedience to the orders of the Government, would collapse.

The Communists would then be faced with the alternative of abandoning their whole conception of the growth of a proletarian State, or carrying out widespread punitive campaigns against their opponents to re-establish the proletarian "front." In a word, the collapse of Communism or more Terror. Every Communist knows this, and, it must be admitted, has the courage of his convictions. He believes, quite logically, that personal liberty is a small sacrifice to make for the success of the Communist ideal, and the absence of any liberty for the opponents of the system is a necessary part of that sacrifice. He denies, absolutely, the democratic contention that a State has no right to govern except by the consent of the governed. Once that contention is denied, a policy of violence necessarily follows, but the Communist who accepts this view has no right to complain if political opinion in other lands refuses to accept the truth and justice of the argument.

Repressive measures are not confined to enemies or alleged enemies of the Government. Force is used to the limit of its usefulness as a means of achieving Communist aims. At present the dictatorship is concentrating upon the enormous task of carrying out the Five Year Plan, the most remarkable programme of industrial development ever attempted in any country. That plan will probably be substantially achieved, and will be followed by a second plan covering the years up to 1937—the second step in the task of converting Russia into a modern industrial State.

To carry out the Five Year Plan now nearing completion the Soviet Government found it necessary to impose severe measures restricting the freedom of the workers, restrictions which no trade union outside Russia would accept. Had the managers of Soviet industry not conscripted their labour power and restricted the right of a worker to leave his job as and when he wished to do so, the Five Year Plan would never have passed beyond the stage of beautiful figures on paper. Again, the vicious circle.

Every dictatorship has advantages which no government basing its power upon a parliamentary machine can enjoy. The concentration of absolutist power in a few hands, combined with the complete censorship of opinion, such as exists in the U.S.S.R. and Italy to-day, enables swift decisions to be made, results achieved which would not be attained by the methods of the debating society, or where public opinion must be considered, and enables at least an appearance of an

impressive public unity to be preserved, if only for internal consumption.

With many of the achievements of the Soviet Government those of progressive views may be in agreement. With the methods of terrorist repression of opinion which made those achievements possible—with the doctrine that the end justifies the means—no democrat can agree without doing violence to that liberalism, that tolerance, that faith in the sacred principles of individual liberty upon which our civilisation is based.

Soviet Russia is carrying out a vast political experiment in ways which, if extended to the world generally, would destroy the political wisdom of mankind and take us back to the Dark Ages.

It is impossible for anyone who believes in liberty to justify the actions taken by the Soviet Government, merely because those actions are based upon an alleged dictatorship of the workers.

"Are we supposed to recognise everything that the Bolsheviks are doing as revolutionary, and to justify everything they have done only because it has been done in the name of revolution?" asks Karl Kautsky of those who sympathise with the Communists from afar because of the tragic history of the masses of Russia in the past.¹

Can human life be sacred in Britain or France and not sacred in revolutionary Russia? Is liberty of conscience, speech and platform a Divine Right of the democracies of the world and a matter of no consequence in Russia? Is the right of every person to fair and unbiased judgment by his fellow-citizens, a fundamental principle of justice in Western Europe, a safeguard which can be ignored in a land of avowed "class justice?"

It is on these questions that the final judgment of the Soviet régime must be based. However sympathetic one may be to much that is happening in Russia, is any other judgment possible than that expressed by M. Emile Vandervelde, President of the Second Labour and Socialist International, who has written:

"From the point of view of humanity it is only too certain that under cover, unfortunately, of a flag of the same colour as our own, things are happening in Russia at the present time which must horrify anyone who respects human life and liberty."

¹ *Bolshevism at a Deadlock*, by K. Kautsky. (Allen & Unwin, 1930.)

ITALY

CHAPTER XI

HOW THE DICTATORSHIP CAME

" Can Tyrants but by tyrants conquer'd be,
And Freedom find no champion and no child ? "

BYRON.

ITALY to-day is still the victim of the post-war crisis. The economic upheaval in the years immediately following the war, the national bitterness aroused by the set-backs of the Peace Conference, the panic of the agrarians and big industrialists before the steady advance of parties with a mass-following, and the decay of the governing class, which had become an effete oligarchy—such are the factors, economic, psychological and political, which must be understood if we would understand why the Italy of to-day is a " Corporative State " under the rule of Benito Mussolini.

The end of the war was marked by an orgy of speculation, in which war-profiters played their full part, speculation which the Government was not only powerless to check, but in which it actually became involved, lending itself to what was called " associated economy "—a policy which was favoured by the working classes who despaired in it the beginnings of State Socialism. " In agreement with the Bureaucracy, bankers and industrialists formed an ever increasing series of consortiums, limited liability companies, huge co-operatives, and fictitious companies, all without capital."¹ The result on public finances can be imagined. The lira, already adversely affected by foreign events, dropped heavily, prices soared, and food riots and strikes became general.

As elsewhere, the Government during the war had made extravagant promises of a new heaven and a new earth. " The peasants during four years in the trenches had been told again and again by their officers and Government propagandists that they should have land as recompense for their sacrifices, till ' The Land for the Peasants ! ' became a watchword." When these promises proved vain, the result was land-raiding on a large scale, especially on the huge neglected estates of the South. Later, some of these raids were the work of the Socialists, but in the earlier days they were undertaken by ex-soldiers with no political intent, who marched carrying the Italian flag and singing patriotic songs. Some 74,000 acres were thus seized, and a further 172,000 taken by agreement with the owners. So widespread was the agitation, which in many cases responded to an ancient and real grievance, that the State found itself obliged to legalise the occupation of ill-cultivated lands, and to provide for the expropriation of the owners.

Yet unemployment among the middle classes was a still more dangerous phenomenon. The Government delayed demobilisation as long as it dared, but when this came, 160,000 officers alone were

¹ *Italy and Fascismo*, by Luigi Sturzo. (Faber & Gwyer.)

thrown on the market, many of them little more than boys who had never learned a trade. In these restless spirits lurked the genesis of the tragic sequel. Disillusioned, discontented with the routine of work even where work was obtainable, they form the nucleus of d'Annunzio's *Arditi*, and of the early branches of the Fascist Party.

D'Annunzio's raid on Fiume marks the first violent challenge to the authority of the Government, "the beginning of the crumbling of the internal discipline of the State." Italy had entered the war with divided heart (her finances indeed had not recovered from the drain of the Libyan War of 1911), and when at the Peace Conference her claims to Fiume were denied, a burning indignation swept the country. On the one hand nationalist ferment centred round d'Annunzio as the hero of the day, on the other "the idea that the war could be said to have been lost as far as national ends were concerned spread among the masses, who already felt the pinch of economic conditions, unemployment and difficulties of a return to normal occupations, and all this produced in many social strata a subconscious rancour against those who had dragged Italy into the war, a rancour fed by the Socialists who then waved aloft the banner of Russian Bolshevism."¹ In certain parts of Central Italy, feeling ran so high that ex-soldiers no longer dared to wear their war decorations in the streets. And into this hot-bed of unrest crept the propagandists of Communism. The more intelligent must have realised that in Italy, land of small holdings, and which cannot support its urban populations without importing coal, iron, foodstuffs and oil, a revolution of the Russian brand was impossible;² but strikes, sabotage, direct action, were weapons which the discontented may use without thought of consequences, and discontent now expressed itself in violence.³ "The soldiers, reading revolutionary papers, no longer obeyed their officers," writes Professor Salvemini of this period. "The officers no longer obeyed the Government, but favoured d'Annunzio. The Ministers had forfeited all moral prestige, and moreover had not enough force at their command to maintain order; they were swayed this way and that by threats of anyone who succeeded in frightening them. Trials for political crimes were postponed by the magistrates who lacked the courage to pronounce sentence. Strikes on the most trivial pretexts were frequent, many of them exasperating, especially those which occurred in the essential services, such as the railways, tramways, postal and

¹ *Italy and Fascismo*, p. 44.

² Professor Salvemini quotes a conversation between Angelica Balabanoff and Lenin, which took place when the news that half a million workers in Italy had taken possession of the factories. Lenin interrupted her enthusiasm for the event with the remark, "Comrade, has it ever struck you that Italy has no coal?" "The great Revolutionary," adds Professor Salvemini, "summed up in this query all that could be said against the dream of a Communist revolution in Italy." *The Fascist Dictatorship* (Cape), p. 29.

³ Later, in January, 1921, a Communist Party came into being in Italy. Until that date Communists worked within the Socialist Party, see p. 174.

telegraph facilities, and the light and food supplies of the large towns."¹

Such was the situation in 1919-20—a situation which, though serious, was not as dangerous as it seemed, owing to the predominance of moderate elements even among the turbulent masses; nor would it have grown acute but for another and fundamental factor—the weakness of the Government.

This weakness springs from many causes, some of which stretch back fifty years to the days of the "making of Italy." During the war, Parliament had hardly sat at all, and all legislation had taken the form of decrees. Political power had become the monopoly of an oligarchy, alien from the life and sentiment of the people, divided into innumerable groups differentiated not by ideals but by personalities. Then in the first elections after the war, this oligarchy found itself threatened for the first time by two parties with mass followings; on the one hand, the Socialists, representing especially the industrial workers, with 153 seats out of 508, led by such men as Turati, Treves and Matteotti, and determined to attain sweeping social and economic reforms; on the other hand, the new Popular Party, with 99 seats, founded by Don Sturzo in 1919, on Christian-Democratic lines, its main plank the extension of the principle of liberty to every field—association, local government, trade, the press—and championing the peasants against agrarian interests. Had these two parties been able to combine, the history of Italy would have been different. As it was, they formed the elements of shifting coalitions. It was said of Nitti's Government in 1920 that it was a *ménage à trois*, that he had the Socialist Party as his mistress and the Popular Party as his lawful wife.

1920 marks the culmination of "Bolshevist" agitation in Italy. Yet all the while, in spite of Government weakness, the forces of order were gaining ground. The Occupation of the Factories in the summer was indeed the last flare of an already dying fire. Nitti though considered by some to be too ready to yield to Socialist threats, had increased the number of *carabineers* from 28,000 to 60,000 and had created the "Royal Guard," an auxiliary military police force numbering 20,000 men. At the same time "the reduction of expenditure, the increase of revenue, and the liquidation of war administration had begun";² and when Giolitti succeeded Nitti in June, he immediately "faced the financial problem by taking strong measures against war profiteers." The occupation of the factories was the direct result of the throes of reconstruction, for while Giolitti's measures "had checked the industrialists and bankers in their heedless course, they were too plainly improvised and irrational, so that if they put a

¹ *The Fascist Dictatorship, 19-20*. See also *Prospettive Economiche*, by Giorgio Mortata (Citta di Castello), 1923, and *Immortal Italy*, by Edgar Ansel Mowrer (D. Appleton & Co.), London, 1922.

² *Italy and Fascismo*, p. 56.

stop to plutocratic excesses, they checked also the incipient adjustment of national economy. The effects were most noticeable on the wages and labour-shifts of the workers, who are always hit by the rebound of offended capitalism. Communist ferment and spontaneous outbursts of feeling did the rest, and the workers in the industrial centres raised the red flag over the factories—an episode that cannot be properly considered apart from the general atmosphere in which it occurred.”¹

The engineers had called a “stay-in” strike on August 20, and ten days later, one of the firms affected announced a lock-out, designed to put an end to ca’ canny methods. The trade union leaders, with more originality than is usually shown by that exceedingly conservative class, announced, as a counter-stroke, a “lock-in.” The strikers seized the factories, and garrisoned them. The movement spread to other industries until half a million men were involved. But far from using this spectacular coup as a lever to overthrow the constitution, both trade union leaders and Socialists sought by every means to guide it along peaceful lines until the wave of direct action was spent.²

“The workers’ leaders,” wrote an eye-witness, “tried to prevent acts of violence, sabotage and theft. Acts of violence against individuals were not numerous, but some of them were of exceptional gravity. Subsequently it was ascertained that the material damage to plant and the waste of raw material and manufactured goods had been rather extensive, but the very nature of the industries concerned, and the timely measures taken by the union leaders, kept theft within relatively narrow limits.”

When Anarchists and Communists sought to give the movement political direction, the leaders of the Socialist parties and trade unions fought fiercely against the suggestion, and on September 11, at a meeting of the Reformist Socialists, a revolutionary proposal was defeated—after a day and half of discussion—by 591,245 votes to 409,606.

Actually the occupation of the factories taught the extremists a lesson. They learnt that they were powerless to produce a land of plenty without technical skill and managerial guidance ; without all the assistance of a peaceful and well-ordered State. The worst phase of post-war unrest had passed, and only strong government and a determined effort to put the finances of the country upon a more healthy basis were necessary to bring about a return to normal conditions.

Instead it is at this moment that a new force appears as a determining factor in Italian politics—the armed bands of Benito Mussolini.

¹ *Italy and Fascismo*, p. 55.

² The *Corriere della Sera*, September 29, 1920 stated : “ Italy has been in peril of collapse. There has been no revolution, not because there was anyone to bar its way, but because the General Confederation of Labour has not willed it.”

And since Benito Mussolini has often been proclaimed the man who saved Italy from Bolshevism, it is interesting to note where he stood before the troublous years 1919-1920.

Before the war, Mussolini was a Socialist of the Extreme Left, ready to approve the worst anarchist outrages. In July, 1910, when a bomb had been thrown in the Colon Theatre in Buenos Aires, Mussolini wrote :

" I admit without discussion that in normal times bombs do not belong to Socialist methods. But, when a government—be it Republican, Imperial or Bourbon—gags you and puts you beyond the pale of humanity, then one cannot condemn violence in reply to violence, even if it makes some innocent victims."

At the outbreak of war Mussolini was editing *Avanti*, the official newspaper of the Italian Socialist Party, and preaching that the workers should oppose taking any part in the conflict, but remain prepared to bring about a social revolution as soon as war had brought a crisis for capitalist society.

Two months later, we find him suddenly converted to intervention, and from October, 1914, pressing for Italy's entry into the war on the side of the Allies, but continuing to preach openly that the war was but the interlude of social revolution.

In 1919 he founded his fighting groups of " Fascists," united in the new Fascist Party. " A genuine war-product, it included the more lively ferments both of d'Annunzian *arditismo* and interventionist Socialism. Born at the time of the Bolshevik movement it was animated by similar statements,"¹ and its programme (as set forth in this *Popolo d'Italia*, for which the funds had appeared from nowhere at the moment of his " conversion " to the cause of war) was at once more revolutionary and more nationalistic than that of the Socialist Party.

This programme included " a National Constituent Assembly, which was to be the Italian section of the ' International Constituent Assembly of the Peoples ' ; the proclamation of an Italian Republic ; the sovereignty of the people exercised by means of universal suffrage for both sexes ; the abolition of the Senate ; of all titles of nobility and of compulsory military service ; international disarmament ; an elected magistracy ; the dissolution of limited liability companies and banks and the suppression of the stock exchange ; the registration and limitation of private fortunes ; confiscation of unproductive capital ; land for the peasants and the transferring of the management of industry, transport and public services to syndicates of technicians and the workers."

When the Socialists demanded the eight-hour day, Mussolini declared that such a demand was a betrayal of the workers. When some workers in Dalmine, a town in the province of Bergamo, during

¹ *Italy and Fascismo*, p. 100.

a strike seized the workshops where they had been employed, he declared their achievement to be "of the greatest value as showing the potential capacity of the proletariat to manage the factories for themselves."¹ The food riots of the summer of 1919 received a like approbation.

"I hope," he wrote in his *Popolo d'Italia* on July 5, "that the masses in the exercise of their sacred right will strike at the criminals not only in their goods, but in their persons. A few food-hogs hanging from the lamp-posts would be a good example. The Fascist Central Committee proclaims its absolute solidarity with the masses who have risen against the famine-makers, welcomes the movement of requisitioning by the people, and pledges the Fascisti to promote and support the agitation."

With the same enthusiasm he acclaimed the forcible seizure of land by the peasants; "The peasants who rise to-day to solve the land question," he declared on May 25, 1920, "must not meet with our hostility. They may perhaps commit excesses, but I beg you to remember that the War was fought by peasants."

The vast strikes of 1920 drew from him the slogan "The Railways for the Railwaymen!" while the occupation of the factories itself was glorified by him as the beginning of a new economic order.

"Our attitude from the first moment has been one of sympathy with the masses," wrote Michael Bianchi, one of his chief lieutenants, in the *Popolo d'Italia*. "To-day, we say the occupation is a formidable mistake, unless the organisers know how to use it as a stepping-stone to another and infinitely vaster scheme. Must it be used for a social upheaval? If so, it would be proof of admirable political sense and would be logical."

"Down with the State in all its forms and incarnations," Mussolini himself had proclaimed a few months earlier. "The State of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow. The *bourgeois* State and the Socialist State. In the gloom of to-day and the darkness of to-morrow the only faith which remains to us individualists destined to die is the at present absurd but ever consoling religion of anarchy."²

Nor was this violence of word alone. While Socialist leaders sought to keep their followers within peaceful limits, Fascists and Communists must be held responsible for much of the disorders of the time. Thus it was the Fascists who burnt down the printing office of *Avanti*, the Socialist newspaper which Mussolini himself had once edited, in April, 1919. And on November 13, 1919, at Lodi, some followers of Mussolini fired revolvers into an election meeting, killing three and wounding eight.³

It was declared at that time that Mussolini "hired bands of civilians

¹ *Popolo d'Italia*, April 1, 1919.

² *Ibid.*, April 6, 1920.

³ Gaetano Salvemini in *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 37.

and *Arditi* for the purpose of terrorizing and committing acts of violence."¹

In short, one may say without injustice that Benito Mussolini played the part of *agent provocateur*, seeking by every means in his power to create the very conditions to which he would afterwards point in justification of the Fascist dictatorship.

That by the end of 1920 the tide of Socialist violence had turned, Mussolini himself admitted.

Writing in *Popolo d'Italia* on November 10, 1920, he declared that "the Italian domestic situation is improving daily." And in the issue of December 31, he wrote :

"It is honest to add that during the last three months—to be exact, since the referendum which led to the ending of the occupation of the factories and since the return of the Mission to Russia—the psychology of the working classes in Italy has changed profoundly. The wave of idleness and shirking seems to have died down. The working masses seem convinced that the fundamental problem of the moment is that of production. A clear symptom of this state of mind is the comparative ease with which agreements lately have been reached after peaceful negotiations in the important trades of textiles and chemicals."

All the statistics—of strikes, of trade, of finance, of revenue tell the same tale.

It was at this moment, the end of 1920, that Giolitti, the aged Prime Minister, urged by the panic of his industrialist and agrarian supporters before the advance of the parties with a mass-following, and realising that the constitutional campaigns of the "Populars" and moderate Socialists were more dangerous to him than wild-cat schemes of revolution, thought to make use of Mussolini's armed bands in order to engineer the municipal elections in his own favour. He had sown the wind and would reap the whirlwind. Electorally, the scheme failed. The Populars won some 1800 of the municipalities of Italy, the Socialists practically as many, including such important cities as Milan, Verona, Leghorn, Bologna. But the Government, by conniving at violence, had struck a heavy blow against the forces of order ; the phase that opens with the municipal elections of 1920 is one of civil war.

It was in Bologna that the first "battle" occurred. The Socialist victory had exasperated the local Fascists, who attacked and looted the Chamber of Labour. The Socialists thereupon organised a big demonstration before the Town Hall on November 21. The police, anxious to avert trouble, discussed the programme with the local leaders, and it was agreed that the red flags of the Socialists should

¹ Statement made by Arbitration Committee of the Lombard Journalists' Association, in *Secolo*. February 14, 1920.

appear on the balcony of the town hall only while the new mayor and other speakers were addressing the crowd.

The Fascists, regarding the demonstration as an act of defiance, issued a typewritten manifesto that ran as follows :

“ Citizens, the Reds, beaten and disbanded in all the squares and streets of our city, call up their hordes from the country-side, to take their revenge and hoist their red flag on the town hall. We shall not endure this insult. It is an insult to every Italian citizen, and to our country, which will have nothing to do with Lenin and with Bolshevism. On Sunday the women and all those who love peace and quiet, are requested to stay at home, and, if they wish to deserve well of their country, to hang out of their windows the Italian flag. On Sunday in the streets of Bologna there shall be only Fascists and anti-Fascists. It will be the test. The great test in the name of Italy.”

There were fanatics on both sides on the day of the meeting, but whereas the Socialists formed a majority of the council, elected by the whole people, the Fascists were a self-appointed body, elected by none. Had the police acted wisely, they would have prevented the Fascists from mobilising on that day.

Troops were actually present and formed cordons round the square, which was filled with thousands of Socialists, but a group of 500 Fascists broke through the first line of troops and attempted to force a way through the second line, just as the new mayor was about to make his speech. At the same time three revolver shots were fired from the direction of the Fascists.

What happened after that is uncertain. The crowds, panic-stricken, forced their way into the inner courtyard of the town hall. Some of the soldiers, perhaps not realising the cause of the panic, began to fire at the town hall. And at this point a Communist named Martelli, a member of the committee which had arranged the demonstration, lost his head and began to drop upon the crowd outside bombs which he had stored inside the building in anticipation of an attempt by the Fascists to storm the town hall. Ten persons were killed and fifty-eight wounded, including many Socialists.

Meanwhile, inside the town hall all was panic and confusion. In this bedlam of sound from within and without, two men suddenly produced revolvers and began to shoot towards the benches occupied by the anti-Socialist minority. One of the anti-Socialist councillors, Signor Giordani, who had been a distinguished officer in the war, was killed and two others wounded.

This outrage provoked a wave of anger throughout Italy. The Socialists themselves, as disgusted as the rest of the nation, now at last realised the incompatibility of Communist aims with theirs, and at their Leghorn Congress, in January, 1921, the Communists were cast out from the ranks of Socialism. Had the Government now

made a determined effort to restore order, and disarmed both extremists and Fascists, the era of violence would have been circumscribed, and Italy would have returned to peaceful ways. But the Cabinet permitted a state of guerilla warfare between two groups of citizens to continue. It permitted the chiefs of the Army to equip the Fascists with rifles, ammunition and lorries, and did not prevent officers on leave from accepting commands within the Fascist ranks. It even discouraged the police and Royal Guard from interfering to keep the King's peace.

The *Fasci di Combattimento* or armed Fascist squads, were henceforth the rallying points of all the forces in the nation which were opposed to the "tyranny" of the workers. As industrialists, land-owners, shopkeepers and professional men, and a little later the Army, began to aid and abet the Fascists, subscribing to their funds, enrolling their sons and employees, the character of Fascism changed. From being a party of the disinherited, the insulted, the discontented, it became the private army of the reactionaries, aiming no longer at the complete revolution which Mussolini had sought, but the power to control the masses and break the power of the democratic parties. If there was ever any danger of an Italian revolution, then the Black-shirts were the "White Guards," enrolled to administer class justice in the interests of the wealthy and powerful.

Of these "sons and hangers-on of the big-wigs" who swamped the original Fascists, Umberto Banchelli wrote :

"They had come into the *Fascio* for their own ends, one of which was to exercise class justice, that is to carry out reprisals, not as Fascists, but as sons of the lawyer, of the doctor, of the war profiteer. If they met men in working clothes, they fell on them and began beating them. Their mentality was on a par with that of the Communists, who had beaten and murdered anybody who was decently dressed. One saw on arriving at the Fascist headquarters the well-known surly and rapacious faces of war profiteers ; these were shabbily clothed and shod, but all had the inevitable diamond on their finger—and we were obliged to accept their money because we needed it to stifle an evil worse than they."¹

I will not outline in detail the reign of terror which was carried out by Fascism during this second phase. Outstanding acts of tyranny for which the Fascist Government itself must accept responsibility are the subjects of other chapters of this book. And the charge of terrorist methods which has been made against Mussolini does not rest upon events before he assumed power—the power to be lenient as well as the power to be severe. During these months which preceded the "March on Rome" the responsibility must rest upon other shoulders. There were certain districts where neither police nor magistrates could be relied upon to administer impartial justice, for fear of

¹ *Memorie di un Fascista*, by Umberto Banchelli, Florence, 1922, p. 12.

Communist reprisals, and there citizens had some excuse for taking matters into their own hands. If the Fascists looted, assaulted and terrorised, there was a Government, popularly elected by the whole Italian people, an Army and a police force. These were the weapons which society should have used. Society chose not to use them, and not only the hunted workers and peasants, but all Italy suffered by that act of cowardice or treachery.¹

"The Fascists, in lorries or with free passes on the railways, swarmed into the towns, sacked houses, looted the Chambers of Workers and other trade union quarters, beat and maltreated, banished or murdered the organisers," wrote Professor Salvemini.² "The country was terrorised by 'punitive expeditions' which set out openly from Fascist offices in the town. The town councils in the hands of the 'Bolshevists' or the Christian-Democrats (Populists), were forced to resign under threats that the mayor and councillors would be murdered. For two years a terrible man-hunt was carried on, organised by the military authorities with the connivance of the magistrates and of the police. It was a pitiless counter-revolution to a *revolution manquee*. Some of the 'War Socialists' of 1919-20 finding that the Socialist organisations had now become 'unhealthy' for them, began to pass over, one by one, to the Fascist Party. Many who had been cowards in 1920, become apostles of terrorism in 1921."

There can be no room for doubt concerning the frequent "neutrality" of the police in the face of these outrages. The fact is attested by too many independent witnesses.

The Socialist deputy, Mario Cavallari, declared :

"The Fascists in their punitive expeditions are followed by lorries of *carabineers* who join in singing Fascist songs. In Portomaggiore, after a painful episode in which a Fascist was killed, an expedition of more than a thousand Fascists spread terror in the night with woundings, burnings, bomb-throwing, invasions of houses, brutal beatings ; all this under the very eyes of the police. As the lorries arrived full of Fascists, the *carabineers*, who blocked the entrance to the village, furnished them with arms and ammunition when needed. At Pontelagoscuro for two days bands of Fascists perpetrated every kind of violence, compelling members of Socialist trades unions to join the Fascist trades unions. A mixed picket formed of *carabineers* and *Fascisti* searched all who arrived by train, allowing only those to pass whom they found to be

¹ Discussing whether Fascism was a "Die-Hard" movement, Professor Salvemini says : "For a Die-Hard movement to become a Fascist movement two conditions are necessary. In the first place the Die-Hards would have to plunge into lawlessness and bloodshed. Secondly, they would then have to find a sufficient number of high military authorities, police and magistrates lost to all sense of law and honour and willing to employ the impartial power entrusted to them by law, in the service of the wealthy against the working classes. Unless these two conditions exist, there is no sense in applying the name of Fascism to a conservative movement." *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 75.

² *The Fascist Dictatorship*. p. 73.

Fascists, and turning back all others. At Argenta, without any pretext whatsoever, a large expedition arrived by night and spread panic among the people, firing rifles and revolvers and throwing three hundred bombs. The expedition was even supplied with a machine gun which told its beads the whole night long. The police looked on and sang Fascist songs."

The attitude of the police, who had been insulted and attacked with impunity for three years, was understandable; the attitude of their superiors cannot be condoned.

Again, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, an American journalist in Italy at that time, declares :

"In the presence of murder, violence and arson, the police remained 'Neutral.' With their full knowledge and consent, these bands scurried along the white roads in their camions, bent upon assault and armed to the teeth. The police captains refused to heed warnings of intended excursions, and where they could not refuse a summons to defend unarmed workmen and peasants, they deliberately arrived too late. When armed bands compelled the Socialists to resign office under pain of death, or regularly tried and condemned their enemies to blows, banishment or execution, the functionaries merely shrugged their shoulders, or like the Prefect of Reggio Emilia, answered : 'That's the way the wind is blowing.' Sometimes *carabineers* and Royal Guards openly made common cause with the Fascists, and paralysed the resistance of the peasants. Against the Fascists alone the latter might have held their own. Against the Fascists and police together, they were helpless, and their complaints merely caused the authorities to arrest . . . them, as guilty of attempting to defend themselves. Socialists were condemned for alleged crimes committed months, years, before. Fascists taken red-handed were released for want of evidence."¹

Another American journalist, John Carter, stated :

"The writer attended in Rome a meeting of the *Arditi del Popolo*, a radical parallel to the unpunished organisations headed by Mussolini. The radical meeting-place was surrounded by plain-clothes men, and a cordon of troops—infantry, cavalry and machine-guns—were ready to attack the workers if they had ventured out of their meeting-place to *bastinado* the Fascist murderers of some working men. This was at a time when the Fascisti had *carte blanche* to beat up their opponents throughout Italy, while the Government pretended to be neutral."²

Guiseppe Prezzolini, an observer favourable to Fascism, states in his book *Le Fascisme* that the Fascists "could organise themselves

¹ *Immortal Italy*, p. 361.

² *New York Times*, June 12, 1927.

into armed corps and kill right and left with the certainty of impunity and with the complicity of the police. It is thus no over-statement to recognise that the Fascists fought with ninety-nine chances out of a hundred of gaining the victory."

All pretence at accepting the verdict of the people, as expressed in the local elections held in November, 1920—after Signor Mussolini had sensed a change in opinion on the part of the workers, a swing towards "Normalcy"—was abandoned. The Fascists decided that they, and they only, should dictate and rule.

A typical case is that of the town of Roccastrada. This town had returned a Socialist majority in the election. On April 6, 1921, the Mayor received the following letter, addressed from the Political Secretariat of "Italian Fighting *Fasci* of Tuscany" at Florence:

"Seeing that Italy must belong to Italians and cannot therefore be administered by individuals such as you, I, voicing the feelings of the citizens of your town, advise you to resign by Sunday, the 17th. Otherwise you will be responsible for anything that may happen to persons and to property. If you appeal to the authorities against this kind and humane advice of mine, the above date will be changed to Wednesday, the 13th, a lucky number indeed.

(Signed), PERRONE COMPAGNI."

Signor Compagni did not venture to explain how he came to be "voicing the feelings of the citizens of your town," when those same citizens, less than six months before, had voted the Socialists into office. Fascism is fortunate in not having to explain its reasoning.

The Socialist Mayor ignored this ultimatum, and for two months nothing happened. It was the lull before the storm. On July 1, 1921, at about 4 p.m., two lorry-loads of Fascists arrived in Roccastrada. According to the account published in *Corriere della Sera* of July 26, 1921, they contented themselves with bludgeoning several people and throwing out of the windows the furniture belonging to the homes of Socialist peasants. The Socialist paper *Avanti* stated that the Blackshirts, having made sure that the men were away in the fields, fired revolvers to frighten the women and children, and then set fire to the Peasants' Club and Woodcutters' Union, and the co-operative stores. They also wrecked the Mayor's house and that of the secretary of one of the local unions.

Some days later the Mayor, while talking with the Prefect at Grosseto, was kidnapped by Fascists, taken to their headquarters and there intimidated into signing a letter of resignation and giving a promise to leave the town immediately.

Those who imagined that with the departure of the Mayor the Fascists would be satisfied, were too optimistic. On July 24, a squad of seventy Fascists once more descended upon the town, where they arrived at 4.30 a.m. Roccastrada was awakened from its sleep by a fusillade of shots, to find the Fascists in possession. There followed

three hours of terror. Such inhabitants as ventured out of their homes were assaulted, houses were set on fire. At 8.30 the Fascists departed for the next town on the programme, there to continue the good work.

Up to that no resistance had been offered, either by the police or the populace. But as the lorries drove off three peasants, concealed behind a hedge, fired on the lorries, killing one Fascist.

The assailants escaped, and the Fascists returned to the town. There they attacked several houses, stabbing four men. One of the victims was an old man of sixty-eight who could not possibly have taken any part in the ambush, and who was killed at his daughter's side. Three others were mortally wounded in the streets, fifty were injured, and seventeen houses burnt to the ground.¹

"The thirteen *carabineers* stationed in the little town remained absolutely inactive, shut up in their quarters," states Professor Salvemini, "they only telephoned to Grosseto what was happening. Needless to say no arrest was made among the Fascists, although the name of their leader, Castellani, general secretary of the *Fasci* for the province of Grosseto, was on everybody's lips, while the three men guilty of the ambush were arrested and severely sentenced. Many other inhabitants of the town were arrested without reason and detained in prison for a considerable time."²

The most savage crimes committed by Fascists during these months were rarely followed by any punishment, while there are cases where workers guilty of self-defence were arrested and received savage sentences. Thus the law operated to protect the Fascists, and to leave the people helpless in the face of their attacks.

An Italian observer, Luigi Fabbri, in the summer of 1922, wrote :

"The hatred which the Fascists are sowing by their daily bludgeonings, by destroying the offices of Labour organisations, by violating all freedom of assembly, of speech, of the press, by rendering the working of political parties in certain districts difficult or impossible, by preventing even the normal evening amusements of working men, attacking them in cafés, or in taverns, and forcing them to go home, by breaking into their homes etc.—this daily growing hatred can find no vent in the light of day. Open reprisals would require that relative impunity, that freedom of movement, for defence or offence, which the Fascists enjoy by the connivance or tolerance of the police."³

Fabbri is an Anarchist, but his testimony against the violent methods adopted by the Fascists is supported not only by an examination of the facts, but by Signor Mussolini himself. Writing in *Popolo d'Italia* on April 5, 1922, *Il Duce* stated: "We must have the courage to say that if there is a Fascist violence which is lawful and

¹ Report in *Secolo* July 18, 1921.

² *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 94.

³ *Controrivoluzione preventiva*, pp. 59-61.

sacrosanct, lying in ambush behind hedges and breaking into houses is not Fascism."

Signor Villari, a professed admirer of the Fascist régime, explains the methods of the Blackshirts in these words :

"The Fascists, armed with bludgeons or revolvers, would enter the town or village where the crime had been committed, arrest the murderers when they could find them, kill them if they resisted, and if not, hand them over to the *carabineers*. If the actual authors of the deed were not discovered, the leading Socialists or Communists of the place would be seized and soundly thrashed, and sometimes the *Camera del Lavoro*, or other red institutions burnt down, or at all events the records and furniture thrown into the street and set on fire."¹

When this sort of admission is made by those who belaud Fascism and its methods, the facts cannot be held to be in dispute. Presumably the "crime" for which Roccostrada was punished was daring to vote for the Socialists' candidates at the local elections !

The casualty lists of Fascists and "Bolshevists" killed during the two phases—the "Red Terror" and the "civil war"—which preceded the *coup d'état*, have been the subject of another Fascist myth. Signor Villari, in *The Awakening of Italy*, states that the number of Fascist "martyrs" up to 1924 was "about 2,000."

The official Fascist publications give a more modest figure. Thus *Barbarie Rosse* ("Red Barbarities") issued in 1921, gives the names of ten Fascists killed during the twenty months from February, 1919, to September, 1920—the month of the occupation of the factories.

For the second phase—the two years of civil war—which began in October, 1920, and ended in October, 1922, another Fascist publication gives an estimate of 351 Fascist dead.² But of these forty-six were killed in conflict with the police who, where they were not fettered by superior orders, did their duty courageously, one died as the result of an accident, one was run over by a lorry. Deducting such deaths, the number murdered was 302.

The figure of workers slain is more difficult to compute, owing to the absence of any attempt to provide official figures, but Professor Salvemini has made a systematic survey of the *Corriere della Sera* from October 1, 1920, to October, 1922, and finds that the anti-Fascist deaths by violence recorded in its columns totalled 406.³ The actual number may have been higher, for many attacks were not reported at all. And those wounded or bludgeoned often died months later.

Up till 1922, Mussolini and his Fascists had resembled the Free Companies of the Middle Ages, who were ready to fight in any quarrel

¹ *The Awakening of Italy*, p. 113.

² *Le Pagine eroiche della rivoluzione fascista*, issued in 1925, p. 233.

³ *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 104.



SIGNOR GIACOMO MATTEOTTI

from which they might gain advantage to themselves. In the elections of 1921, in spite of Fascist terrorism, Socialists and Populists had returned in strength. The country was tiring of violence. Mussolini, who had been elected to the Chamber at the head of a small group of thirty-five Fascists, realised that as the nominees of the people, *Fascismo* would remain in opposition. Faced with the possibility of a strong Government of Socialists and Populists, Mussolini broached the subject of "national concord" or coalition. On July 1, 1921, two Socialists and two Fascists met in Rome, with the approval of Mussolini, to discuss a truce.

As soon as news of the negotiations was noised abroad, there was opposition from the Communists on the Left and Fascists and Nationalists on the Right, but the Fascist Deputies, heartened by the support of Mussolini, continued the negotiations, and on August 3, 1921, an agreement was actually signed between the two parties in which "they undertook at once to stop threats, acts of violence, reprisals, punishments, *vendettas*, pressures and outrages of every kind."

Whether this was or was not a mere political manœuvre, it could not be pleasing to the vested interests from which *Fascism* now drew its strength.

Sixty secretaries of Fascist branches in the provinces, representing 160,000 members, met at Bologna, and repudiated the agreement made with the support of their "idol." Whereupon Signor Mussolini resigned from the National Executive of *Fascismo*, declaring he washed his hands of the movement.

"*Fascism*," he wrote in a bitter article on August 7, 1921, "is no longer liberation, but tyranny; no longer the safeguard of the nation, but the upholding of private interests, and of the most grovelling and unenlightened classes existing in Italy."

Had he possessed the power with which his propagandists now like to credit him, his resignation would have dealt a mortal wound to the "rebels." But *Fascism* had by this time become the expression of all the reactionary forces in the country; it marched on without him.

In the *Popolo d'Italia* on August 18, 1921, he has shifted his position:

"How is peace to come about? Perhaps you think you can get it by wiping out the two millions of citizens who voted for the Socialist Party? But are you not running the risk of perpetrating civil war? Or of being obliged to submit to a Socialist peace to-morrow, owing to some quite probable turn of the tables? Do you not see signs of this? Will not the united anti-Fascist front, destroyed by the agreement, form up again to-morrow almost automatically? I lay down the leadership. I remain, and I hope to be able to remain, a simple member of the *Fascio* of Milan."

The well-paid ranks of *Fascism*, with their influential and reactionary backers behind them, paid no heed. Whereupon Signor Mussolini, realising which way the wind was blowing, withdrew his resignation, and attended the congress of the party in Rome in November, 1921, as though nothing had occurred—even going so far as to describe the agreement as a “temporary arrangement.”

Not long after he let it be known that his earlier anti-monarchic convictions were not what they were, and in the following September he announced their complete disappearance—thus cementing his alliance with the Right. Had he failed to do so, it is quite probable that he would have seen d’Annunzio installed in his place.

“Mussolini’s task was not an easy one,” says Professor Salvemini. “It required no ordinary amount of skill. The rank and file of the Fascist movement included men of the most diverse origin and mentality; employers of labour, who provided funds, and syndicalists, who but yesterday had led revolutionary strikes against these very employers; Army officers, schooled in monarchical ideas; and Republicans, who would have nothing to do with monarchy; land-owners, who took up arms to defend their properties, and a half-starved intellectual proletariat, with nothing to lose and everything to gain, playing truant from the secondary schools to join in punitive expeditions under the illusion that they were doing a patriotic thing, and criminals taking advantage of these same expeditions to gratify their lust for violence.”¹

Signor Mussolini proved himself the perfect demagogue. He stirred up an enthusiasm, especially among the younger members, which gave to *Fascism* the power to do big things. (Many ardent anti-Fascists of to-day will tell you they were “Fascists of the first hour.”) He became the world’s supreme propagandist. He talked of the glory of Italy while those behind him prepared for the military *coup d’état* that was coming. “The messenger of God” put up a smoke screen that blinded Italians and foreigners alike. So he proved himself worthy of all the honours which *Fascismo* has loaded upon him.

It has been said that *Fascismo*, by the march on Rome, saved Italy from Bolshevism. The facts already presented in this chapter prove that such a statement will not bear examination. A further investigation of the available figures for trade and finance likewise reveals the hollowness of any such pretence. Signor Mussolini himself admitted as much during the weeks when he was seeking an alliance with the Socialists. Writing in *Popolo d’Italia* on July 2, 1921, he said:

“To say there still exists a Bolshevik peril in Italy, is to substitute certain insincere fears for the reality. Bolshevism is vanquished. Nay more, it has been disowned by the leaders and by the masses. The Italy of 1921 is fundamentally different from that of 1919. This has been said and proved a thousand times.”

¹ *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 127.

Why, then, did the Fascists seize the Government and overthrow all free institutions? Why have they permitted no opinion but Fascist opinion to exist in Italy since 1923? The answer to those questions is that the Fascists seized by unconstitutional means what they knew the people of Italy would never give them by free and open votes. Had they had any chance of gaining a majority in the Chamber at any election, they would have waited. They knew that they had not.

They needed power for the very simple and human reason that power meant offices, privilege, salaries, honours—and money in the pockets of their industrial backers. Because they knew that no political party condemned to eternal opposition can hold its members. The machine had been created—it must be employed. And the Italian people were sick and tired of violence—would have welcomed any party in power that would put an end to it—a feeling intensified by a new general strike in the July of 1922. There may have been some who imagined that when in power, the Fascists would shed their barbarities and become civilised. Would even, as they admitted that the Bolshevist peril was over, permit a return of freedom and bring an end to fear. If such people existed, they were destined to a rude awakening.

The Fascists needed power because many high officers in the Army and many magistrates had seriously compromised their positions by openly abetting the lawless activities of the Fascist squads. These people knew that the formation of a strong parliamentary Government would not be long delayed, and that with its coming, there would come the day of reckoning for them. For them Fascism was a necessity. They could maintain their positions and escape retribution by no other means.

But all this would not account for *Fascism's* success, without that curious psychological fact (of which we have had experience in England, in the year following the General Strike), of a panic arising many months after the danger to which it refers is past. In the Italy of 1922 Bolshevism had been dead two years, beaten by events before those lorry-loads of black-shirted warriors rode out to spread violence through the countryside. Yet the fear of the wealthy classes before a wholly imaginary Bolshevist peril can only be likened to the indefinable cases of mass-suggestion, such as the unreasoning panic that sometimes seizes on crowds. As a matter of fact, what they really feared was the old spectre of an alliance between moderate Socialists and Populars, between, as they termed it, "Red Bolshevism and White." Unfortunately both these parties, which together might have achieved a strong progressive Government, were hampered by organic defects. Turati, the veteran Socialist leader, was compelled by the Extreme Left of his party to refuse all co-operation in a *bourgeois* Government, after he had actually been received by the King to that end, and the coming split between Left and Right weakened the party.

And while the Popular Party rather gained than lost by the secession of a Right Wing of conservative clericals, its parliamentary efficacy was diminished by the fact that its leader had not a seat in the Chamber. Thus when the crisis came, the issue remained with the Old Guard of pre-war politicians, almost all of whom were severally compromised with *Fascism*.

And thus, though Mussolini's parliamentary force was only 35 out of 570, at the end of October, 1922 he was able to compel the resignation of the Cabinet, and in the resulting crisis to find the opportunity for his march on Rome.

The Fascist ultimatum, delivered after a meeting of the Fascist chieftains at the Hotel Vesuvius at Naples, on October 24, demanded that the Government should hand over its powers to the *Fascisti* within forty-eight hours, otherwise the legions would seize Rome by force.

The Government rejected the ultimatum. If Mussolini had, as he afterwards declared, 52,000 Blackshirts at his disposal, within Rome itself was a strong garrison of troops and police, which would have been quite sufficient to hold back the concentrated Blackshirts, while others hurrying towards the capital could have been stopped on the railways. There was no need for panic, and indeed the first thought of the Cabinet, after an all night sitting, was the proclamation of martial law.

But that Cabinet could have no real authority. It had handed in its resignation, at the dictates of Mussolini, two days before, and its chief, Signor Facta, a man of vacillating temper, dared neither withdraw these resignations nor make way for a successor. And at the same time, the forces of order had been undermined by treachery in high places. It was said, and had been said for the past two months, that in the event of a clash between Parliament and Fascists, the latter could rely upon the "neutrality" of the Rome garrison.

What is certain is that on October 27, when the mobilisation of the Fascists was in progress, General Diaz, Commander-in-chief, and the man upon whom the Government must rely for protection of the democratic liberties of the people, spoke to a gathering of Blackshirts from the balcony of the hotel in which he was staying at Florence, declaring his "emotion at the welcome with which they had greeted him," and the following day, in a newspaper interview spoke of his sympathy with the Fascist movement. At the same time General de Bono, later to become notorious in circumstances outlined in another chapter, was one of the inner circle of the Fascist Party, and five other Generals (Fara, Ceccherini, Zamboni, Tiby and Maggiotto), of whom indeed only a minority were still on the Active List, commanded the Fascist legions that were on the move towards Rome.

Signor Facta discussed the decree of martial law with the King on the morning of October 28. It was not signed then—both the King and Prime Minister hesitating to use force until compromise had

definitely failed. When later in the day Facta returned to secure the King's signature to the decree, certain Army and Navy chiefs had been before him, assuring the King that the Army, for all its oath of allegiance to the constitution, would refuse to fight the Fascists.¹

News that martial law was to be proclaimed had already been circulated. When the King, following his talks with the Army chiefs, refused his signature, the Fascists knew that the day was won. After that, attempts to discover an alternative Prime Minister who was not Mussolini, could only end in failure. The Fascist triumph was complete. From all parts of Italy, thousands of Blackshirts, hearing news of the triumph, rushed to Rome. By the afternoon of the 29th, only one course of action was left. It was Mussolini as Prime Minister or a Republic, or even—. The open secret that there was a member of the Royal Family prepared to further Fascist aims with enthusiasm, that there might be an alternative king if there was no alternative Prime Minister, may have had something to do with King Emmanuel's surrender. That night he telegraphed to Mussolini to come to Rome and form a Cabinet. The idol of *Fascism* was at last in control of Italy. As symbol of his victory he demanded the peaceful entry of his Blackshirts into Rome. And thus the "March on Rome," which at one time must have seemed a wild threat, became reality.

Already in many towns the Fascists had occupied town halls, public offices, railways, barracks and newspaper offices. In some they had been beaten back by the forces of the Crown, in others the military authorities had become their accomplices. And now, on October 31, they converged on Rome for their triumphal entry.

The Fascist "March on Rome" will rank among the great events in the history of our times. It had about it qualities that stir the hearts of men. To many of the young men in the Blackshirt ranks that day, *Fascism* was more than an adventure, it was a crusade. They knew nothing of the plutocratic influences behind the scenes. When they were told that a bloodless revolution was necessary to save their country they believed it. Had they found a bloody revolution awaiting them at the end of the March in all probability they would have acquitted themselves well. All this we may concede them. The hollow sham lay not in the ranks of the simple-minded provincial Fascists, but in the utterances of those who knew that the March on Rome was staged not to save Italy, but to destroy parliamentary institutions.

Those who hoped that the coming of *Fascism* to power would see an end of unauthorised violence were destined to be disappointed. The violence continued during the months that followed. It still continues, and since the passing of drastic laws in 1926, it has become legalised and part of the normal machinery of the Fascist Government. To violence has been added repression. To-day no one who is not an

¹ See *Italy and Fascism*, p. 119, and *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 157.

enthusiastic adherent of the Fascist régime has any rights whatever. One may admit that *Fascism*, with unlimited power at hand, has done some wise things, and that it has helped to reinvigorate the national spirit of Italy, which had been obscured in the years of post-war depression. But that fact cannot conceal the price which all that is finest and free in Italy has paid for the faltering in high places and the treachery of the Army chiefs which gave the Fascists their triumph. The March on Rome was to end the reign of force. Instead it ushered in the days of the new Inquisition—the era of the secret police, the political crime, imprisonment without trial, and the secret informer. The story of terror which broods over that lovely land to-day is told in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XII

ITALY IN CHAINS

"The Fascist government abolished in Italy every safeguard of the individual and every liberty. No free man can live in Italy, and an immoral law prevents Italians from going to a foreign country on pain of punishment. Italy is a prison where life has become intolerable. Without free parliament, free press, free opinion and true democracy there will never be peace."

EX-PREMIER NITTI.

THE electoral system and laws under which Italy is governed have been carefully devised for the protection of the Fascist Party, and to suppress any challenge to its undisputed sway over Italy.

The opponents of *Fascismo* would call the present juridical, political and economic conditions a stranglehold. The Fascists refer to them as "inexorable developments" for the maintenance of law and order and the punishment of the enemies of the State.

Parliamentary government no longer exists in Italy. The law-making body to-day is the Grand Council of *Fascism*. This body came into being shortly after the March on Rome as a private advisory council to the Prime Minister. Later it superseded the popularly elected Parliament and became the supreme assembly, controlling all the activities of the régime.

One of the important functions of this Council is that of "designating" the deputies for the Corporative Chamber, or Fascist "House of Commons." When an election is to be held, a list of selected candidates is prepared by the six National Confederations of Employers, the six National Federations of Employees, and the Confederation of the Professional Classes, each of which nominates its allotted share of the total candidates. Two hundred more names are presented by educational and other bodies designated by the Government. When complete, the list containing one thousand recommended candidates is considered by the Fascist Grand Council, who may make its selection of four hundred deputies from the thousand names presented by the Corporative organisations, or add other names more acceptable to the Fascist machine. There is, therefore, nothing to prevent the Fascist Grand Council from ignoring the entire recommendations of the Confederations and substituting a final list of candidates compiled without reference to the views of anyone. Whatever the composition of the final lists, the next step is "ratification" by popular vote of the entire electorate.

The whole country forms a single electoral unit, and the official list of four hundred candidates is placed before the electors *en bloc*. Voters are required to record a plain "Yes" or "No" to the question "Do you approve the list of deputies designated by the National Grand Council of Fascism?" No opposition candidates are permitted to stand. Unless a majority of electors vote against the list, the whole four hundred are declared elected.

Concerning this method of electing a "Parliament," the General Secretary of the Fascist Party stated, in a speech made on January 22, 1928 :

"The method of appointing the leaders from above is a fundamentally Fascist one. It has produced good results by suppressing all remains of democratic mentality. We are an army of believers, not a mass of associates."

while Mussolini himself, interviewed by the Buenos Aires *La Prensa* on December 7, 1926, is reported to have declared :

"Our aim is to create a Corporative Chamber without an opposition. We have no desire or need for any political opposition."

And on May 26, 1927, he stated in the Chamber itself :

"The humbug of universal democratic suffrage has been solemnly buried in the Corporative State."

Moreover, as all political parties other than the Fascist Party were dissolved by special decree in 1925, and are now illegal organisations, to belong to which is punishable by imprisonment or exile for a term of years, there is no possibility of organising even passive resistance to the functioning of the Fascist machine, except by clandestine means.¹

Even with all these precautions, it is just possible that a majority of votes might be cast against the chosen four hundred. Improbable as that contingency may be, the law must provide for it. It does so by decreeing that, in the event of an adverse vote, fresh elections shall be conducted on alternative lists of candidates—these candidates to be chosen from nominations made by Fascist organisations having over 5000 members. Thus in the highly improbable event of a vote against the nominees of *Fascism*, the elector is faced with a further list of representatives who are likewise the selection of the official machine.

Commenting upon this "safeguard," Signor Rocco, Fascist Minister of Justice, in an interview with the *Paris-Midi*, of February 10, 1928, said :

"The country will be able to express its opinion about the candidates proposed and the policy they represent. If by an extraordinary chance a difference were to appear between the answer given by the nation and the preliminary selection made by the authorities representing the nation, this would be simply the sign of some misunderstanding or uneasiness which it would be well to dissipate. But we shall always be sheltered from chaotic elections and surprise outbursts of public opinion."

¹ The Italian Liberal Party was dissolved in fact, though not by law. All other parties were absolutely suppressed and designated conspiracies.

With elections conducted under this procedure, it need cause no surprise that Signor Mussolini, speaking the day before the polling of April, 1929, declared that even if the vote went against him, the régime would continue to function just the same !

The General Elections of 1929 show the system in practice—and since the continuance of terrorism is made possible, indeed, necessary, by the entire absence of free elected institutions of government, it may be of interest to see how they were conducted.

From one end of Italy to the other official manifestos with the names of the selected four hundred candidates were posted up for the information of the voters. All these lists were headed with the name of Signor Mussolini, emphasising that *Il Duce* was the first choice of all the Fascist organisations upon whose lists the selection of the Grand Council was based.

There were no opposition lists, no election addresses, no discussion whatever in the press. In Rome, according to the London *Daily News*, the one election poster was issued by the Governor, Prince Boncompagni Ludovisi, to inform the population that "voting for the approval of the list of four hundred candidates to be submitted by the Fascist Grand Council" was to take place on the date mentioned. Nothing was heard of the right of the electors to reject the Grand Council's list.

Voting is ostensibly by secret ballot, and elaborate preparations were made for recording the decision of the electors. Each polling station was presided over by a president, nominated by the President of the Court of Appeal, and guarded by Fascist militia. Upon each elector's satisfying the scrutineers of his identity (women possess no votes in Italy) he was supplied with two voting papers. That bearing the answer "Yes" to the question "Do you approve the list of deputies?" was tri-coloured inside. The other, to be used by those who wished to vote against the list, was white inside. The elector was required to drop the voting paper he did not wish to use in a sealed box provided for that purpose and to hand the second paper, recording his choice, folded, to the President, who, after scrutinising the official stamp on the paper, himself placed it in the ballot box. It is clear, therefore, that the President of each polling station was in a position, if he so wished, to learn how any citizen voted. Whether this method constituted a "secret ballot" is a matter of opinion. I will only add that many observers of the election had no doubts on the matter.

An eye-witness to the elections stated: "We laughed at foreign comment on last April's election and Mussolini's article in an American magazine to show that every vote was freely recorded. Why, even to-day men are in prison for refusing to vote Yes to the one ticket, drawn up by the Fascist Grand Council, and were well beaten by the Blackshirts beforehand."¹ Similar abuses occurred unchecked,

¹ *New York World*, July 29, 1929.

in many parts of the country. In some places boys of seventeen, who under the law were not entitled to vote at all, recorded their votes seven times under the direction of their Fascist superiors.

The truth is that while there are isolated instances in which electors openly voted against the official list without suffering any "reprisals," as a general rule the Fascist organisations took steps to ensure that the voting should produce a favourable result, and intimidation was widespread. The evidence contained in these pages should enable the reader to understand why many voters preferred to sink their own opinions and vote "straight" for *Fascism* rather than risk the wrath of its local disciples, and how it was the four hundred Fascist deputies were elected by an overwhelming majority, for which Signor Mussolini claimed the value of a plebiscite.

The Corporative Chamber thus carefully selected, with every member an active supporter of the Fascist Party, nevertheless functions without any real powers. The Italian Parliament could not pass a vote of "no confidence" in Mussolini or *Fascism* even if two hundred and one of its members were miraculously converted to more democratic ways of thought, for by a law of December 24, 1925, it is decreed that no motion can be laid before the Chamber or the Senate without the previous sanction of the Prime Minister, who can thus veto any discussion which does not meet with his approval.

A further law of January 31, 1926, provides that the Government may modify any existing law, or promulgate new edicts by Royal Decree in any field of public administration "whenever reasons of urgent and absolute necessity require it" without the authority of either Chamber. The sole exception to this absolute power of the Executive is an obligation placed upon the Government to secure parliamentary sanction for its enactments within two years of their date. And even this mild provision is rendered useless by an interpretation placed upon it by Signor Rocco, who has explained that "if in extreme cases it proves impossible to secure agreement and the case is one of urgency a fresh legislative decree will be promulgated."

In addition to this Corporative or Lower Chamber, there is a Senate. This consists of one-fifth generals, one-fifth high officials, one fifth landowners, one-fifth industrialists and bankers and one-fifth university professors and intelligentsia. All Senators are appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister and it may be assumed, therefore, that all of those entitled to take part in its deliberations are *persona grata* to the *Duce* and the Fascist machine. Here again, however, an additional safeguard has been thought to be necessary. It is provided that the number of Senators is not limited. By this simple provision it becomes possible for Mussolini, in the unimaginable event of such a body becoming obstreperous, to appoint a sufficient number of new Senators to "water down" the opposition and secure a majority.

This is the parliamentary machine which Mussolini has declared to be a "united true democracy." I have outlined at some length the methods by which it is appointed and functions, in order that the reader may realise how impossible it is for those opposed to the present régime to succeed in any protest against *Fascism* short of actual and sustained violence, at least unless the Italian people as a whole rose up and demanded a return to free institutions in a voice which the Fascist Grand Council, and the "selected" Corporative Chamber could not disregard. It must be admitted that there are few signs of any such development at present. In any country the proportion of the total population which is actively interested in politics—or conscious of the suppression or otherwise of intellectual freedom—is always small. It is always the few vigilant idealists who protect the liberties of the many. And in Italy many of the intransigent idealists are, by the admission of the Fascists themselves, either in the ranks of the deportees or in exile. Further, while on the one hand, the crusade of high-pressure nationalism conducted by the Fascists has won them many supporters, the constant terror of a highly efficient spy service, joined of recent years with the ever-present spectre of unemployment, has paralysed the bulk of the people.

Order is preserved in this Corporative State by a series of new laws passed by Parliament, and issued by Royal Decree, which give the authorities absolute control over every individual, his movements, actions and opinions.

For some years following the March on Rome, and the accession of the Fascist Party to power—at least until 1926—sporadic disorders and atrocities, mostly the work of Fascist bands, continued to terrorise the towns of Italy, the victims being any who were known opponents of Mussolini.¹ With the election of a completely Fascist Chamber, and the "purging" of the judicial system, it became possible to promote the necessary law to "regularise" the war upon political opponents, and attempt to replace irresponsible action by legalised measures. A new law, setting up a "Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State" was passed, and the Tribunal duly established on November 25, 1926.

The Special Tribunal has a permanent seat in Rome, with sections in the provinces. It is composed of high officials of the Fascist Militia, and officers of the Army belonging to the party. Its judges are appointed personally by Signor Mussolini, who can therefore be held responsible for the decisions reached.

Before this Court are brought all persons charged with political offences, and it has power to pass sentences of death, imprisonment for up to thirty years, deprivation of citizenship, or confiscation of private property. Any or all of these sentences may be passed even when the prisoner is not personally brought before the Tribunal.

¹ In Milan more than a hundred houses and offices were looted and destroyed during November, 1926.

The charges for which any person may be tried by the Tribunal include endangering the public security, opposing or hindering State officials in their duties, or membership of any organisation which may be considered dangerous to the Fascist political machine. And the Minister of Justice has himself stated that "only the political authorities may decide which, and in what degree, a certain form of political organisation is dangerous."

This purely partisan Court was established for a period of five years, expiring in 1931. In view of the prominent part played by the Special Tribunal during the years following 1926, it occasioned no surprise when, on March 6, 1931, it was announced that a meeting of the Fascist Grand Council had decided that "as from July 1 next the political offences contained in the new Penal Code shall come under the competence of the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State, the existence of which will be prolonged under a legislative enactment to be passed to this end." Thus what began as an avowedly temporary measure has now been incorporated permanently in the Fascist legal machine, and to it has been entrusted for an indefinite period the conscience of modern Italy.¹

The procedure of this Court is laid down by Article 7 of the law of November 25, 1926, as "according to the rules laid down by the Penal Code of the army in time of war." It is therefore a political court-martial. Its procedure is, however, even more summary than that of any court-martial in any civilised State.

Under that law political prisoners have been (a) sentenced for offences committed prior to the setting up of the Tribunal; (b) sentenced twice for the same offence; (c) deported without trial and later brought before the Special Tribunal and sentenced afresh; and (d) sentenced without the nature of the "crime" being disclosed.

The interpretation of the law of November, 1926, accepted by the Tribunal provides that "public opinion" is sufficient to declare any anti-Fascist dangerous to the State, and therefore a criminal within its jurisdiction. As the only "public opinion" in Italy is Fascist opinion, it is fair to draw the conclusion that anyone not belonging to a *Fascio* may be arbitrarily declared dangerous at any time. Further, paragraph 166 of the Royal Decree classifies political opponents of *Fascism* with traffickers in narcotics, *souteneurs* and prostitutes.²

The procedure of this Fascist Court is rigid, and could scarcely be held to be impartial, although apologists for the Fascist régime have declared that to be the case. During the period of preliminary enquiry which precedes the hearing, the accused cannot secure the assistance of a lawyer, nor obtain access to the evidence against him,

¹ Speaking in January, 1931, Senator Longhi stated: "The Special Tribunal, which punishes severely, but justly, should perhaps be destined . . . to become in its essential constitution the sole and permanent tribunal for the defence of the State and for all the territory of the State." *Times*, March 7, 1931.

² See *Italy*, by Luigi Villari, pp. 230-31.

without the permission of the Court, which is, under the law, specifically empowered to decide that the defendant shall be made acquainted with the evidence only on the day of the trial. The Court may require the defendant to select his counsel from among the officers of the Army or Fascist militia.

In other cases not subject to this stipulation, the accused may select a lawyer from the list prepared by the Tribunal (which recognises only Fascist lawyers), but even this privilege may be vetoed by the President of the Court at his discretion, who may himself appoint a counsel for the defence from the Fascist ranks. In any circumstances the field of selection is limited, for the well-known lawyers who are prepared to undertake the defence of those charged with offences against the State are "a mere handful," and these "must one and all begin their speeches by lauding the work of the régime, or the Tribunal and of its President."¹

During the early months of the Special Tribunal many trials were conducted with considerable publicity. More recently, the usual practice has been to make them as swift and as private as possible without enforcing actual secrecy. The foreign press is admitted to any trial upon production of a personal permit from the Foreign Office, but the seats reserved for the Italian "public" can only be reached by the production of documents proving the political "good faith" of the would-be spectator.

By a decree of March 1, 1928, it became compulsory for the President, the Public Prosecutor and all judges of the Special Tribunal to possess a law degree. But the judge who conducts the preliminary enquiry, cross-examining witnesses and preparing the indictment, requires no qualifications beyond sound Fascist opinions. And it is this official who plays the most important part in all cases coming before the Tribunal.

The decisions of the Court are final and irrevocable. There is no appeal, but a sentence may be "revised" at any time before the expiration of the punishment inflicted.

The President of the Tribunal may forbid the production of any evidence or material proof which he considers may endanger the public interest. A remarkable example of the working of this provision was afforded during the trial of Zamboni, accused of the attempted assassination of *Il Duce*, when the President forbade the production in court of the only evidence which could prove that the attempt had actually taken place—the clothes which Mussolini was wearing at the time.

The usual form of trial, according to many who have been arraigned before the Tribunal, is as follows. The President of the Tribunal puts the usual questions, seeking an admission of guilt. The answers must be brief—no speech by the accused is permitted. Usually there is no opportunity for proving an *alibi*, even if one is available. In

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, February 27, 1931.

most cases there are plenty of witnesses for the prosecution, and few or none for the defence. Witnesses for the prosecution are mostly agents of the Fascist party or members of that party, while those desiring to give evidence in favour of the accused do so at some risk, for the gulf which separates the witness-stand from the dock in a Fascist court is a narrow one.

The position of any lawyer selected to conduct the defence is likewise by no means easy. Paragraph 7 of the law establishing the Special Tribunal declares that "the President has the right on demand of the prosecutor, or if he himself finds it necessary in the public interest, to dismiss any lawyer if he is not a military man. The decision of the President is irrevocable." Many lawyers, not desiring to lose their practice and come under suspicion, are naturally desirous of avoiding any conflict with the President. For that reason the verdict "Not Guilty" is almost unknown.

The condemned, in chains, are taken from the court to the prison van. In the streets, small groups of women and children, relatives of the prisoners, wait to bid them farewell. Men are rarely in the crowd; for them to show themselves or make any demonstration of sympathy, may result in arrest for showing moral sympathy with the enemies of Fascism.

In one respect this Court is unique. It may sit in judgment upon those accused of crimes committed long before it came into existence, and which, under the laws of Italy prior to November, 1926, were required to be tried in an ordinary court before a jury. Under this regulation, contained in paragraph 7 of the decree setting up the Special Tribunal, were tried the cases of Zamboni for a crime alleged to have been committed in November, 1925, Ducetti for an offence in September, 1926, and thirty-seven Communists for actions against the State committed in 1925. All these cases were heard before the Tribunal during 1927.

Further, from February, 1927, political prisoners sentenced by the Tribunal are subjected to the same treatment as criminals, are chained to them, and incarcerated with them in prison. Such was the treatment suffered by General Capello, by many members of Parliament, intellectuals, youths of twenty years of age, and by Signorina Giorgina Rossetti, a young lady who was condemned by the Tribunal to eighteen years' imprisonment for refusing to give evidence against her fiancé.

Nor are all Italians deprived of personal liberty for political reasons arraigned before the Special Tribunal. Before that can be done, a definite charge must be preferred. The same law, therefore, provides for the sentencing of any opponent of the State to deportation by administrative process, without any trial whatever, and without the authorities having to make any charge against them other than anti-Fascist activity, either perpetrated or contemplated.

In the administration of these sweeping powers against the liberty

of the subject, three separate stages of action are usually but not always observed.

The first action, taken immediately the person comes under suspicion of anti-Fascist leanings, is the *diffida* (warning) which is given to them by the police. Anti-Fascists are warned to take no part in politics, and informed that they must not even be "interested" in them, even for literary purposes. Usually this warning is accompanied by a thorough search of their homes.

The next step is the placing of the suspect under police surveillance (*ammonizione*). Any person may be condemned to such surveillance without enquiry or examination, and without redress, for a period of two years, after which the surveillance may be renewed. During that time the suspect is prohibited from leaving the place in which he lives, must not leave his house before a certain hour in the morning and must return before sunset; he is also prohibited from attending any public meeting. The penalty for non-observance of these regulations is imprisonment from two months to one year. It is not difficult to realise the effect of these restrictions upon a man's business and family life. In an atmosphere of general suspicion and fear, persons coming under police surveillance are abandoned by their friends, clients and business associates. Frequently the police make it their business to inform those who know the suspect "in a friendly way" not to associate in any way with the family concerned, thus completing the loss of reputation and credit, and, in the case of a business or professional man, the inevitable bankruptcy.

The third measure of prevention which may be taken against persons who have committed no crime for which they can be arraigned before the Special Tribunal is deportation (*il confino*). According to the official interpreter of the new law, Emilio Saraceni,¹ "Persons may be condemned to deportation who have committed or manifested the clear intention of committing, acts in defiance of the laws of the national State, or that might endanger public security or oppose or hinder the action of State officials in such a way as to incite manifestations against national interests. Condemnation to deportation may be incurred by any persons who are a danger to public order even though they have not previously incurred police supervision or legal penalties. . . . The enquiry may include not only a person's present activities but also his past conduct, his relations with other persons with similar opinions and tendencies, his intellectual activities and his capacity for further developing a line of action dangerous to national order."²

Persons against whom administrative action is taken under this procedure may be required to reside where directed by the authorities

¹ *Nuova Pratica di Polizia Amministrativa*, published in Naples, 1929.

² According to Mussolini, in the first six months of the application of the law, 939 persons had received warnings and 698 had been deported for offences committed before the law was made. See L. Ferrari, *Le Régime Fasciste Italien*, an interesting analysis of Fascism from the juridical standpoint.

for a certain period of from one to five years. The place of exile may be any province of Italy except the one in which the suspect has been living. In practice all deportees are sent to one of the penal islands off the Italian coast, of which Lipari and Ponza are the largest and most notorious, but in special cases permission may be given for the period of exile to be spent in some province on the mainland. Thus Dr. Massarenti, of Molinella, was deported to Campania; the former Deputy Giuletti was deported to Nuoro, while Signor Torrigiani, the head of Italian Masonry, after deportation for two years to Lipari, was at the beginning of 1930 in hospital in Laxio. In general, however, it may be said that this concession is applied only to invalids, whom the authorities are certain will be unable to make any attempt to escape from the country.

The punishment of deportation is inflicted without trial, by simple administrative measure, by a special commission.

"This Commission," states Emilo Saraceni,¹ "is presided over by the Prefect (of the town concerned) and is composed of the Chief of Police—who proposes the punishment—the Public Prosecutor, the Colonel of the local *carabineers*, and a higher officer of the Fascist Militia designated by the District Commandant." It is called the "Provincial Commission."

According to many witnesses, the procedure is that the suspect is arrested, and forthwith begins the journey from prison to prison which ends at one of the deportation islands. Only at some period during that journey, when he is away from friends, relatives or legal advice, is he notified of the sentence passed upon him.

Thus Professor Nello Rosselli, brother of Carlo Rosselli, one of the three deportees who succeeded in escaping from Lipari in July, 1929, was arrested as a "hostage," and under the charge of assisting in organising the escape, on July 29. On the 31st, he was already on his way to the island of Ustica, and it was later in the journey that he was notified that he had been condemned to deportation for five years. According to Signor Lussu, another of the three deportees who escaped and a former deputy, the majority of those deported never know the crime of which they are accused, and for which they have been sentenced, and never see the Commission or their judges. The verdict is delivered to them either in a typewritten form or by telephone.

Any condemned man may appeal against his sentence to a special Commission of Appeal (*Commissione d'Appello*). This Commission is under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and consists of the Minister himself, the General Attorney, a senior officer of the Fascist Militia and a senior officer of the Army. The appeal of the condemned person to this Commission does not delay the execution of the verdict.

¹ *Nuova Pratica di Polizia Amministrativa*, pp. 376-77.

Information is available which proves that the Provincial Commissions are used, not only to suppress all liberty of opinion, but also to settle personal feuds and remove those whose presence may for any reason be inconvenient to officials. One man was deported to Lipari for three years as a dangerous anti-Fascist on the sole evidence of an officer in the Fascist militia who was in love with the deportee's wife.

In Bordigali, in the province of Nuovo, the *Podestà* (Governor), who was also the chief of the *Fascio*, summoned before him the local landowners and informed them that they were to be deported. The men, who had never taken any interest in politics, offered him a sum of ten thousand *lira* each to avoid banishment. These abuses became known and provoked a scandal.

In Nughedu S. Vittoria, in the province of Cagliari, the chief of the local Fascists deported a relative because of a disagreement concerned with a marriage settlement. Other serious abuses arose over the working of the Provincial Commissions in Sicily and Sardinia, where many were condemned to deportation as accomplices of the *Maffia*, the secret society which for so long terrorised these islands. A typical case was the deportation, without any enquiry, of Elia Porchedda, a relative of Grazia Deledda, one of the foremost Italian novelists and a Nobel Prize winner. Porchedda was saved only owing to the intervention of this writer.

Such a drastic system for the maintenance of law and order, and the suppression of freedom of speech, platform and opinion, could not be maintained in a country which possessed a free press, or where freedom of comment was permitted to the bodies controlling the profession. In Italy, the "Fascistising" of press and professions is as complete as is the case with Parliament or the legal code.

By a law dated April 3, 1926, and by an enactment dated April 21, 1927, the right of any citizen to exercise his profession as lawyer, journalist, or doctor is subject to the unconditional judgment of a special Fascist Commission to which the applicant must apply for the necessary licence, and which will decide, after a review of all the political and other factors concerned, whether the applicant is acceptable or otherwise to the authorities. If he is "suspect," the necessary permission may be withheld and he is debarred from practising his profession.

It is quite simple for the Fascist authorities to maintain this strict censorship, as all professions now have their Corporations, to which all members must belong. These Corporations are Fascist organisations, controlled by the State, and membership may be refused to all who are not *persona grata* to the Government. Cases are on record in which men who were famous lawyers in pre-Fascist Italy have been refused membership, and have thus been forced to abandon their legal work.

A further tightening up of this measure for controlling the Bar was

included in a decree dated November 22, 1928 (No. 2580), article 1 of which provided that the Councils of the Bar would henceforth be absolutely and entirely nominated by the Government. By the same enactment, the general assemblies of barristers and solicitors were suppressed, thus removing all possibility of defence or redress for barristers or solicitors against whom disciplinary action may be taken by Government commissions.

The defence of any political prisoner is sufficient to place a lawyer under suspicion, and to endanger his practice. One example may be quoted. A former Fascist deputy, following a difference of opinion with his party, left the country. Having no one to regulate his affairs, he sent a perfectly regular request to his barrister to collect money due and to settle his debts. This the lawyer proceeded to do. The matter came to the knowledge of the police, who at once ordered the barrister to hand over monies collected, and placed him under strict police supervision, which, as I have shown, was tantamount to preventing him from continuing his work as a lawyer, while the fact that the former Fascist deputy, now in exile, was one of his friends, is in itself sufficient to prevent the public from having dealings with him.

Lawyers suspected of not being good Fascists may be either barred altogether, or required publicly to recant their opposition to Fascism as a condition of receiving the necessary licence to continue their careers. This, however, though a general rule, is not universal in practice.

In June, 1927, in the town of Alexandria, the chief of police notified all barristers and solicitors not active Fascists that before their membership of those professions could be confirmed, their signatures were required to the following document :

" Although until now I have remained aloof from the Fascist Party and Fascist régime, owing to my sectarianism and my prejudice, I consider it my duty to declare :

" 1. I denounce my part in everything concerning my open or secret disagreement with the activity of the Fascist Party and Fascist system.

" 2. I have judged it necessary to make this apostasy myself in order to repair the consequences of my politically reprehensible conduct.

" 3. With sincerity and conviction I will, from to-day, give my adhesion to everything that party and system may do in the exercise of their duties.

" 4. I acknowledge that Fascism saved the country and that it has the right to the gratitude of all Italians.

" 5. From to-day I shall make use of my profession and develop all my activities not only without any factious opposition but with the aim of helping to strengthen Fascism as the sacred religion of every Italian.

"To certify the genuineness of this declaration I sign it and authorise the Fascist Party to use it in any way they may think fit."¹

Declarations in similar terms were required from professional men in many parts of Italy.

Despite the obvious danger of any expression of opinion not favourable to the Government, the lawyers of Italy did not accept this total suppression of their intellectual freedom without demur.

At a congress of lawyers held in Turin in October, 1923, and attended by the Fascist Minister of Justice, Signor Carnazza—a congress which despite the presence of the Minister became a protest meeting against the suppression of liberty—a resolution was passed in which the congress protested "against the illegal imprisonment and long detention for insignificant political reasons, and sometimes without any reason at all, of lawyers of established reputation and prominence in their profession." A similar resolution was passed a few months later by the General Council of Solicitors at Naples. The Italian Bar put up a long and fiercely contested struggle for independence, but without securing any modification of the stranglehold which *Fascismo* has established over that profession.

These "disciplinary decrees" controlling all lawyers, private teachers, doctors and journalists, were later extended to cover the whole intellectual field. Two further decrees, both dated February 11, 1929 (Nos. 274 and 275), instituted disciplinary colleges and official registers for surveyors and industrial experts. From that date no surveyor may be employed upon even the smallest task if he has committed any act "contrary to the interests of the nation," while no skilled industrialist can earn his bread if, for the same "crime," he has been refused inscription in the register, and the necessary licence to work. Even the universities—last refuge of liberty of opinion—have been "Fascistised" in similar thorough fashion by orders of *Il Duce*, and many of the greatest teachers in Italy are to-day outcasts because they will not bow the knee to the Government.

Naturally, in this "purging" of the professions, the press was not overlooked. "The press," declared Cesare Rossi, former head of the Press Bureau of the Fascist State,² "is absolutely controlled by Mussolini." Not only must every journalist, from editor to junior "sub," be a nominee of the Fascist Party, but no one can earn a living by writing in any newspaper or review (whether political, philosophical, scientific or artistic) without being enrolled in the Fascist syndicate for the press. And enrolment cannot be obtained until the candidate proves (by a certificate of the Prefect of the town in which he resides) that he has been and still is "well conducted politically."

Any journalist who is refused membership of this syndicate, and therefore unable to practise his profession, may appeal against the

¹ See *L'aventure Italienne*, by Silvo Trentin, Paris, 1928, pp. 283-87.

² Letter to *Daily Herald*, March, 1926.

decision to a commission of the press. These appeals are regulated by a decree dated May 18, 1929, which provides that the appellant must notify his appeal at his own expense to the trade union which has made the decision, to the Public Prosecutor, and to the Prefect. Each of these parties is allowed two months in which to lodge a report with the secretary of the Commission together with any documents proving that the applicant is unfitted to continue his profession.

The appellant may appear before the Commission in person to plead his case—and against him may be ranged all the resources of the Public Prosecutor's department, together with counsel engaged by the Prefect. As in the case of the Special Tribunal, there is no means by which publicity may be given to the final decision, for article 8 of the decree states: "The sittings of the Central Commission are not public. The Commission makes its decisions without the presence of the parties concerned."

The nation-wide ban upon free speech, exercised both by force and by the restriction of employment in any intellectual capacity to supporters of the régime, extends to Parliament itself. Apparently the elimination of any Opposition and the election of a 100 per cent Fascist Chamber of Deputies is not in itself sufficient to guarantee that no anti-Fascist speech is delivered, even with the hazards which such a proceeding would inevitably mean in Italy to-day. Yet another decree provides that the Prime Minister (to whom all deputies must take an oath of allegiance in addition to their oath to the Throne) has the right to pronounce judgment on any speech or manifesto delivered in Italy "which may be judged dangerous to the State," and that he may impose punishment of from six to thirty months' imprisonment and a fine of from 300 to 3000 *lira*—without trial and by administrative action through the police.

A new law of public safety further provides that administrative measures may be taken to prevent the delivery of any dangerous manifesto or speech if it is considered necessary for the safety of the State. From such a ban there is no appeal.

A case which reveals the methods by which this stringent decree is applied, occurred in Milan in 1929. An artistic and literary club decided to organise a series of conferences in honour of Belgian art and literature in celebration of the anniversary of Belgian Independence (1829-1929). A number of prominent Belgians were invited to attend, including Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, Ensor and Laer, while speeches were to be delivered by Carton de Wiart, Fern, Grommelinck, Pierre Daye and two famous Belgian Socialist orators, Jules Destree and Louis Pierard.

Invitations were duly sent, but shortly after they were followed by a letter from Milan, informing the Belgians that a serious difficulty had arisen which must be settled before the invitations could stand. The Federal Secretary of the Fascist organisation had informed the club that the lecture by Jules Destree would not be permitted, owing

to his known opinion concerning *Fascismo*. At the same time the Italian Government demanded an assurance that no lecturer would make any statement derogatory to the régime.

It is interesting to note that Louis Pierard, who in addition to being a Socialist is an eminent Belgian journalist, and whose entry into Italy the Government refused to sanction, has tried many times to visit Russia, but has been refused a *visa* for that country also.

Every dictator finds in the power of censorship a potent weapon. In Italy the censorship is strict and unrelenting. It not only controls what may be said or written in that country, but seeks to control those who interpret events in Italy to the outside world.

"We are bound by the worst censorship ever imposed," wrote an American correspondent in Rome. "We must not write anything that might reflect on the *Fascisti*. We are confined to an apology for political assassination. It broke my heart not to be able to report the Matteotti case as it should be done, but it would have meant arrest and expulsion from Italy."¹

The censorship of the press began with a decree promulgated on July 12, 1924, which provides for suppression "if any newspaper or periodical by false or misleading news causes any interference in the diplomatic action of the Government in its foreign relations, or hurts the credit of the nation at home or abroad, causing undue alarm among the people, or in any way disturbs the public peace . . . if the newspaper or periodical by editorial articles, notes, titles, illustrations or inserts incites to crime or to class hatred or to disobedience of the laws of the established order or upsets the discipline of those engaged in public service or favours the interests of foreign states, groups, or persons as opposed to Italian interests, or insults the nation, the King, the Royal Family, the *Summo Pontifex*, the religion, the institutions, or the authority of the State or of other friendly powers."

Following this decree, in November, 1925, the *Corriere della Sera* was subjected to such persistent interference that the proprietor, Albertini, was forced to sell this famous journal. An action declared by the London *Times* to be "a serious loss to European civilisation" and one which would make it "hard in future to understand Italy or *Fascismo*."

The following month, on Christmas Day, 1925, a new and even more stringent censorship law was passed, which almost obliterated all independent journals. One clause of this decree provided that "Prefects of police are empowered to seize editions of newspapers that attack the Government as regards foreign policy, or that injure national credit at home or abroad, or that alarm the people without justification."

Finally, in 1926, all non-Fascist newspapers and periodicals of every description were abolished, and it became a crime to print, publish or circulate any publication not licensed by the Fascist régime.

¹ Quoted by George Seldes in *The Truth Behind the News*, p. 41.

Under this law publications were divided into two categories, thus described by George Seldes, who was at that time the representative of an American newspaper in Rome :

" The first category includes those newspapers ' which by their origin, their activity on behalf of the Fascist cause, the political loyalty of their directors, editors and administrative staff, give secure guarantees of being worthy to be considered the true and real organs of the régime.'

" The second category is made up of journals ' sympathetic to the régime,' and control over them will be exercised by means of the ordinary press laws in force. No non-Fascist writer may join the staff of a Fascist publication.

" The perfect Fascist journalistic state has thus been achieved."¹

Since that date all newspapers and periodicals in Italy have been propaganda sheets for the existing régime, receiving instructions from the Fascist Council on what should and should not be printed, and frequently orders stipulating the tone which should be adopted on matters of public policy. The result is a megaphone press which eclipses anything known outside of Soviet Russia, where similar conditions prevail.

How closely news is controlled may be judged by the following extracts from the instructions issued by the censors between August and November, 1926 :

August 5. The publication is prohibited of any news concerning the interview given by Rabindranath Tagore to the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna, in which he denied having expressed sentiments of admiration towards Fascism attributed to him in the Italian press.

August 20. The Government orders newspapers to refrain from any discussion of the return to the gold standard, whether defending or criticising that decision.

August 25. It is forbidden to publish any reference to the fact that a motor-car of the *entourage* of Signor Mussolini has run over a carter between Rome and Sant 'Ilario.

September 3. Any reference to a fraud, amounting to 200,000 *lira*, committed by the Fascist lawyer of a bank in Milan is prohibited.

September 4. It is forbidden to allude to incidents which occurred during the reopening of a theatre in Milan.

September 12. It is forbidden to allude to incidents which followed the attempt of a man named Lucetti on the life of the *Duce*, and especially to hostile manifestations against the French Consulate.

September 15. The Prefect recommends the greatest prudence in the publication of articles concerning the controversy between the Italian and French press.

¹ *The Truth Behind the News*, p. 53.

- September 16.** The President of Ministers orders all publications to cease immediately all discussion with the French press on causes of friction between the countries.
- September 21.** Any reference to the visit to Rome of the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, for the purpose of regulating the question of Zarabub, is prohibited.
- September 23.** By order of the President of Ministers it is forbidden : (a) to publish the Attorney General's report on the inquest on the deaths of the Fascist Luperini and the anti-Fascist Becciolini at Florence ; (b) or to refer to the economic, financial or political penetration of Italy into Albania.
- September 24.** No news should be given concerning the movements of Ministers.
- October 13.** It is forbidden to publish any news concerning the robbery committed by Italian soldiers in the hotels of Meran.
- November 6.** Any discussion concerning Franco-Italian relations is prohibited. It is also forbidden to give any news concerning difficulties encountered by the Bank of Pordenone.
- November 9.** It is forbidden to publish any news concerning political events following Zamboni's attempt upon the life of the *Duce*.¹

So far as is possible, this strict censorship is extended to newspapers of other nations. No correspondent who sends home news unfavourable to the régime is permitted to remain at Rome.

"The hundred or more representatives of the foreign press in Rome have to ask themselves every day, 'Is this piece of Fascist terrorism worth mentioning? Am I to risk being thrown into the Queen of Heaven Jail, or being thrown over the frontier for this small item?' And the reply is always, 'This is too small. Wait for something big; another Matteotti assassination; a national uprising; something big enough to warrant the risk.'"²

Any attempt by an Italian, still resident in Italy, to tell the truth in a foreign newspaper, would be followed by a swift appearance before the Special Tribunal, if nothing worse befell him. Before 1926, such a brave spirit would have been fortunate to escape death at the hands of the Fascist bands who sought to prove the superiority of their methods by violent assault upon all who disagreed with them.

Count Guglielmo Salvadori, lecturer at the University of Rome, was one of those who discovered how sensitive is the Fascist to even reasoned criticism. This gentleman wrote two articles for the British press and they duly appeared in the *New Statesman* of March 1, 1924, and the *Westminster Gazette* of March 24. Both articles were unfavourable to Fascism. Reprisals were not long in coming. On the afternoon of April 1, 1924, a squad of armed Fascists arrived at his

¹ *Exposition de la presse anti-Fasciste Italienne*, Cologne, 1928.

² *The Truth Behind the News*, p. 49.

house and invited him to accompany them to their headquarters. Having received their word of honour that he would not be assaulted, the Count very bravely went with them. What happened after that to the man who had dared to speak his mind to the British public has been recorded by Salvadori in the *Mondo* of July 2, 1924 :

" I found myself in a room surrounded by some fifteen individuals. First they flung at me the most infamous and wounding insults : traitor, swine, bastard, rascal, parasite, paid agent of the foreigner, etc. I was then violently struck in the face by one after the other with ever harder and more frequent blows. Blood was flowing from my cheeks, nose, chin and ears. Resistance would have been useless. It was one against fifteen, and more. Exhausted by the blows, and almost fainting, I said, ' Remember that I have three children waiting for me at home.' On hearing an infamous insult against my mother, I said : ' Let my mother be. She was a saintly woman, and she is dead.' My protests only served to increase the fury of those maniacs. I was searched. At last they seemed to tire, and telephoned to the police. While waiting for the policeman to come, one of them came up to me with a basin and sponge, and tried to wash away the bloodstains from my coat. They warned me that I should be shadowed, and that there were people determined to kill me. When the policeman came, they handed me over to him, calling him to witness that I was unhurt and that, except for a few slaps, I had received no harm. I observed something tragic in the look the policeman gave me. I had the explanation of it when, at home, I saw my face in the glass : there were two slashes at right angles on my forehead, a gash on each cheek, and one under my chin. At the door of the *Fascio* I was assaulted with cudgels by some thirty maniacs. A revolver shot was also fired. They would probably have done for me, but for the interference of my son, who was waiting for me in the street. He flung himself upon the assailants, drawing their rage upon himself. He was struck, man-handled and thrown down half stunned."

Count Salvadori placed the task of bringing the hooligans to justice in the hands of his solicitor and left the country. But although the assailants were known, no witness would dare to testify against them. The house of the solicitor's partner was looted by the Fascists. The Examining Judge was not able even to trace the policeman to whom Salvadori had been handed over. In these circumstances it was impossible to obtain justice. Nor can others be blamed if they refrain from writing articles for the foreign press, at least until both they and their families are safely out of the country.

Financial pressure is another weapon used by modern Italy for the suppression of the true facts concerning the Fascist régime. The Italian tourist, railway and hotel organisations are big international

advertisers and "these organisations," writes George Seldes, "demand subservience to Fascism as part of their advertising contract. They dangle their millions before business managers and withdraw their advertisements if the editors mention Fascist violence in Italy. Following my expulsion from Rome (for cabling to America news unfavourable to the Fascist régime) the big hotel and tourist groups and the Government railways cancelled their advertising in my papers and wrote many letters to say they would resume if unfavourable news were suppressed in the future."¹

Thus to-day not only does the average Italian know nothing except what his rulers wish him to know, but the news reported in the foreign press is both incomplete and often distorted.

Regulated from morning until night, his opinions dictated by law, his movements and conversation watched, his employment often subject to the consent of the dictatorship, it would be surprising if those who disagree with Benito Mussolini's opinion of the benefits of Fascism—and despite the material benefits of Fascism, and the personal popularity of the *Duce* such "intellectual rebels" do exist in Italy—did not turn their eyes to other and freer lands. But even the right to migrate is denied to all opponents of the Fascist régime.

On November 5, 1926, the Cabinet issued the following regulation :

"All passports for abroad are to be called in, and all passports already issued to be cancelled from the 9th inst., except in the case of those held by persons now abroad. Any attempt to leave the country without a regular passport, or to assist any person in so doing is to be punished. Order will be given to fire on any person attempting to cross the frontier by non-authorised routes."²

Anyone guilty of unauthorised expatriation for reasons unconnected with politics is liable under the Law for the Defence of the State dated November 6, 1926, to a term of imprisonment varying from six months to three years ; anyone leaving the country for political reasons is sentenced to a minimum term of three years and a fine of 20,000 *lira*. The same punishment and fine is meted out to those who in any way assist in the preparation or execution of an escape. (It should be noted that it is left to the authorities to decide when an *émigré* so leaving the country is actuated by political motives.)

Such a ban upon political opponents who may intend to carry on a campaign against the Fascist régime in a free country is at least intelligible. But the law is wider in its effects than that. It aims at anybody who may for any reason—lack of employment, desire to see relatives abroad, to find better wages, or through disapproval of conditions of life in Italy to-day (which would rank as anti-Fascist)—

¹ *The Truth Behind the News*, p. 56-7.

² *Corriere della Sera*, November 6 and 7, 1926.

attempts to leave the country after permission to do so has been withheld. And, as I have said, it is rarely that such permission is given, whatever the reasons advanced, except to those whose political opinions are "sound."

A third provision in the decree permits any Fascist to use firearms against those attempting to escape.

Despite the certain risks, many men formerly prominent in Italian public life have faced the dangers of flight rather than remain, their lips sealed and their every movement noted by the police, in Italy.

The continuance of this complete suppression of all liberty is guaranteed by the ample armed forces at the disposal of the Government.

The Terror in Italy functions with the aid of 150,000 police, 60,000 *carabineers* and 265,000 members of the Fascist militia, together with countless spies and *agents provocateurs* who infest every railway station, hotel, club, factory and even café.

Members of the militia, which is the army of the Fascist Party, are maintained at the expense of the taxpayer, and take an oath of allegiance both to the King and to the régime.

"The militia," declared the *Duce* in a proclamation issued on September 12, 1925, "draws its officers and men exclusively from the Fascist ranks, and its chief task is to defend at all costs, both at home and abroad, the régime which came into being with the 'March on Rome.'"

In addition to the officers of the militia, there existed until recently in every Italian town, a Fascist chieftain, who directed the Fascist squads in their acts of violence against the population. Many of these men held themselves to be above the law, and terrorised whole populations—civilians and officials alike.

In the early days of the Fascist régime Mussolini took drastic steps to end a state of affairs which disgraced his party, but it was not until 1928 that the "*Ras*," as these petty dictators were termed, could be brought under control.¹

The militia undertakes all duties necessary for the safeguarding of the régime. It guards the frontiers and the ports, polices the prisons and islands of deportation. With the police, the Fascist militia is quick to detect any whisper against either Mussolini or Fascism, and to take energetic measures for the suppression of the slightest criticism of the régime, whether that criticism comes from Italians or foreigners.

¹ The pro-Fascist *Corriere d'Italia*, reporting a circular issued by Mussolini calling for strong measures against irresponsible local violence, declared on January 7, 1927, "The circular proclaims the end of lawlessness and squadristism. It will no longer be possible for Fascist secretaries or simple blackshirts in the provinces to take violent measures in exceptional circumstances on the assumption that they will obtain the tacit approval of the government and the central Fascist authorities, and thus be assured of immunity."

It also maintains order in times of national excitement, and "stage-manages" those manifestations of popular idolatry to which Benito Mussolini is somewhat partial.

The militia is the real army of modern Italy—an army paid by the people and serving not Italy, but the political party which happens for the moment to have control of the destinies of the Italian nation.

CHAPTER XIII

FASCISM'S BLACKEST CRIMES

"If the wretched incident of last June (the murder of Giacomo Matteotti) took us by surprise, we should not be taken by surprise now, whatever might happen in August and September. Nobody can bring our régime to trial. If our opponents think they can do so by compiling a list of all our illegal acts, we declare that it is impossible. That would mean bringing to trial the March on Rome. And if our opponents put the question in terms of force, we will act accordingly."

MUSSOLINI in *La nuova politica dell' Italia*, 1924.

WERE it possible to arraign the Grand Council of Fascism before a World Court to answer for the crimes its adherents have instigated in the fight to stamp out liberty in Italy, the two most damning charges in a terrible indictment would be the persecution and death of Giovanni Amendola and the slaying, directly inspired by prominent Fascist officials if not by Mussolini himself, of Giacomo Matteotti—the cold-blooded murder which provoked, even in Italy, such a howl of execration that for a few days the *Duce* felt power slipping from his grasp.

Although both these crimes have been reported elsewhere and both occurred during the early days of the Fascist régime, when much of its record of tyranny and violence had still to be written on the page of history, no account of the fight for Italian liberty would be complete without a re-statement of the events which resulted in the deaths of these two Italian patriots.

Giovanni Amendola died in France in 1926, but before he escaped into exile he had received at the hands of Fascism five successive "lessons" that those who espouse the cause of liberty in Italy to-day do so at their peril.

Amendola was a Neapolitan, born in 1882, and in 1912 was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pisa. Upon the entry of Italy into the World War, he volunteered for service, was wounded, many times mentioned in despatches and finally retired from the Italian Army with the rank of captain.

In 1919 he was elected to the Italian Chamber as deputy for Salerno, and thereafter occupied a prominent place in the political life of his country, holding the post of First Secretary to the Minister of Finance in the Nitti Government, and receiving the appointment of Minister for the Colonies in the parliamentary administration presided over by Facta, before the March on Rome swept away the last assembly to be freely elected by the people of Italy.

A constitutional monarchist by political conviction, Amendola was a leader of the Liberal Party and in no sense an extremist—in England he would have been a supporter of Mr. Baldwin and moderate Conservative opinion.

He was guilty of but one "crime"—he preferred government of

the people by the people to "elections" that were a farce and government by a self-appointed dictator. And for that crime he was hounded to his death.

The first attack upon Amendola occurred on December 26, 1923, at 10 a.m. in the *Via Francesco Crispi*, in the centre of Rome. The deputy was walking down this street when five men who had been following him in a motor-car leapt out and attacked him with bludgeons, striking him on the head and face until he fell insensible. His assailants then re-entered their car and disappeared unhindered, despite the fact that the scene of the assault was a busy street, with several police posts in the vicinity. Amendola was taken to hospital by passers-by who had witnessed the attack.

The second "lesson" came on March 20, 1924, when Amendola was to have delivered his election address at Naples, but was prevented from doing so by an order issued by the General Secretary of the Fascist trade unions which called for "a great concentration of the Fascist trade unions in Naples for the debate between the candidates Greco and Amendola on the subject of constitutional opposition. All members must be present in full force, with flags and black shirts."

Following the issue of this mobilisation order to Fascists, the police prohibited the holding of the meeting, in the interests of public order.

The third "lesson" came on April 7, when Amendola disobeyed a Fascist order forbidding him to speak in Rome. He was attacked by hooligans armed with bludgeons. This time Amendola was unhurt, but several of his supporters had to be taken to hospital.

The fourth demonstration against him was made on June 3, 1924, a week before Matteotti was murdered, and following the opening of the new session of the Italian Chamber. According to the report appearing in the *Corriere della Sera* (June 4, 1924), Fascists were ordered to demonstrate against the opposition following the adjournment of the Chamber.

"When the deputies Amendola, Bencivenga, Molé and Labriola, and members of the editorial staff of *Mondo* (Amendola's paper) appeared, the mob succeeded in surrounding them, and accompanied them, yelling, pushing and threatening, towards *Piazza Colonna*," stated the *Corriere della Sera*. "In *Via del Tritone* the violence of the demonstration reached its height. The police tried in vain to isolate the group of deputies. For a moment it seemed as though they would be overpowered. One maniac was brandishing a heavy Indian club. A closed car into which Amendola and the editorial staff of *Il Mondo* jumped, was besieged by the crowd until the police succeeded in making a way for it to pass."

The fifth and final "lesson" was timed for July 20, 1925. Amendola had gone to Montecatini to rest after the strain of life in Rome. Immediately news of his arrival became known, a thousand Fascists

gathered from the villages around before the hotel in which he was staying, and demanded that he should leave at once. Amendola bowed to their wishes, re-packed his baggage, and left by car.

The local Fascists, having assured Amendola that he would not be molested, deliberately laid a trap for him. That same night the car was attacked by a gang of Fascists who were lying in wait for it at Serravalle, on the road from Montecatini to Pistoia. Amendola was taken out and blows rained upon his head, face and body. This time Fascism won its fight. Amendola never recovered. After two operations necessitated by his injuries, he died in France on April 6, 1926, the official medical report of his death, signed by three prominent French physicians, stating that the cause of death was "a degeneration of the left hemi-thorax consequent upon violent blows administered in July, 1925."

Such is the story of the persecution of this Liberal statesman under Fascism. Were the attacks upon him the work of unauthorised hooligans, as the Fascist Government declared, and as was clearly possible in the chaotic conditions of Italy at that time, or were those attacks part of a deliberate policy of violence against the still-surviving parliamentary opposition instigated by Fascism as part of a campaign for the complete suppression of all anti-Fascist elements in the public life of Italy?

Evidence which has since become known concerning the first attack upon Amendola throws an interesting light upon that outrage, and forms an indictment to which Fascism has not provided an answer.

Following the attack in the *Via Francesco Crispi* at Rome, the police—at the head of which at that time was General De Bono, a high Fascist official—declared that they were doing everything possible to establish responsibility for the crime and to bring those who were guilty to justice. Only later was the truth discovered, thanks to the evidence of Signor Vico Perroni, an officer of the Fascist militia, who in the course of a report dated June 29, 1924, confessed that he had been in charge of the "expedition" which had assaulted the deputy.

"About December 20," stated Perroni in this report, "Consuelo Candelori, who was the commander of our Legion, asked me if I would like to take part in a punitive expedition against a person who by his activities put great obstacles in the way of a national Fascist Government, hindering its development in the interests of the people. When I answered in the affirmative, and so undertook an obligation to take part in the affair, I was told that the 'person' referred to was the deputy Amendola, whom it would be necessary to 'teach' by administering a beating.

"When I heard the name of Amendola I was frightened at first, but then I ascertained personally that it was the desire of His Excellency Mussolini himself. This was confirmed at an interview which



SIGNOR AMENDOLA

One of the bitterest opponents of Fascism, who succumbed in France to injuries inflicted upon him by blackshirt terrorists.

I had with General De Bono, who gave me definite instructions that Amendola was only to be assaulted and beaten, and added that even if he defended himself with firearms, we were not to use arms against him, even at the risk of our own lives."

These accusations against De Bono, head of the police at Rome, and against Mussolini, were later supported by two letters written by Perroni, copies of which he sent to the chairman of the enquiry which was held into the incident, and both dated March 25, 1925.

In the first letter, addressed to De Bono, Perroni stated: "I know that if what you have said about the assault upon Amendola is the truth (and I know that it is true from many sources) you also are a victim, because you are repudiated by the men who gave you these orders which you passed on to me."

The second letter had been addressed to Mussolini himself and contained the following passages:

"From the chief Command of militia you may ascertain that I received an order which was a sign of special confidence. The same Command recommended me for a decoration for special services after my actions against the deputy N—. In December, 1923, as you may know, General De Bono instructed me that action had to be taken against Amendola. Owing to certain difficulties, execution of this order was delayed for a certain time and I was reprimanded by the General for my inaction, and he declared to me that this business had to be accomplished because it was the will of the highest authority, and that if I could not execute my orders, he would have to replace me by someone else. It is needless to relate that besides the discipline which must exist (in the Fascist ranks) I should have counted myself dishonoured if I were replaced.

"I did my job and after that in the Command and the *Questura* (police headquarters) everything was discussed, especially regarding what steps were necessary to ensure that the affair remain a close secret."

A similar accusation against Mussolini and De Bono was made by Cesare Rossi, at that time chief of the official Press Bureau of the Italian Government, who later escaped to France and there exposed the activities of Fascism, only to be lured back to Italy by a trick which will be described later in this chapter.

Commenting upon the attack upon Amendola in a memorandum dated February 11, 1925, Rossi declared: "I read about the business in the *Piccolo* and immediately telephoned to De Bono, asking him if he knew who were the madmen who in cold blood had bludgeoned Amendola on Christmas Day (*sic*), although he had made no recent outstanding demonstration against the régime. He answered that 'fools had been chosen for the job.' My curiosity was aroused. I went to his office, and again expressed my surprise and disapproval. He answered me candidly: 'It was the boss who willed it so.' I went on to ask him what the Prime Minister had said to him. He

answered : ' The first time he pretended to be embarrassed. Evidently there was someone with him, but afterwards he telephoned to me by the private line saying that it had given him a better appetite for lunch.' "

As I have already mentioned, the five Fascists who had carried out the assault disappeared in a car without any attempt upon the part of the police to stop them. But they made one mistake, or, perhaps, they were not sufficiently careful. For they drove in the same car, which had been seen by many people, directly into the barracks of the Fascist militia. Despite that glaring clue, the enquiry conducted by the police was closed on the ground that there was no evidence to show who was responsible for the assault !

Concerning this point in the affair, Rossi, in the Memorandum quoted, says : " Faced by the insistent protests of *Il Mondo*, Signor Mussolini began to grow uneasy about the way the assault had been planned. He commented ironically on the fact that the motor-car went straight away to the barracks of the militia in *Via Magmamapoli*, on the excessive number of the assailants, and on the way in which the attack had been conducted. It was on this occasion that the Prime Minister said ' These jobs must be entrusted to persons who know how to assume responsibility for others,' "—a comment the reader should bear in mind. " I recently heard from the Prime Minister himself that the police had managed to persuade the staff of *Il Mondo* that foreign elements and influences were mixed up in the affair and so obtained their silence as to the way in which investigations were carried out."

Those " methods " by which Fascism sought to cloak its crimes of violence were clearly outlined in the second Memorandum of Cesare Rossi, especially in paragraph 8 of that document :

" It is interesting to note the system by which General De Bono carried on his policy as director of *Pubblico Sicurezza*. It seems to me that he himself patented this method. When he had to deal with certain crimes against anti-Fascists, or committed by prominent Fascists, in which public opinion had evinced interest, he would arrest a Fascist with whom he had arranged an understanding ; a Fascist who, admittedly, had had nothing whatever to do with the affair in question, and then he would give him every possibility of proving an *alibi*. When this *alibi* had been established, and in every case this was easily accomplished, the ' suspect ' would be liberated and the enquiry closed on the ground of lack of evidence. It was especially easy for him to so arrange matters, because De Bono was at the same time chief of the police and chief of the Fascist militia. So General De Bono, clad in a black shirt, would organise an outrage with Fascists who were useful for this special purpose, and then the same De Bono, in the uniform of the Director of Police, would arrest the ' criminals,' hold an enquiry into the crime which had been committed under his orders, taking care to hide those really guilty and by

his conclusions and decisions would confuse the Court and prevent justice from being done."

The same Rossi has related how Mussolini was amused by the craft and cunning of De Bono. Every day, when De Bono attended upon the *Duce* to present his daily report, Mussolini would ask him: "Do tell me, how many more Roman citizens were presented for identification to the poor shopkeeper from the *Via Capolicasa*?" Mussolini was hinting about a man who had assisted to take Amendola to hospital after the assault—a man who declared that he would recognise the culprits. Therefore De Bono "arrested" persons known to be innocent and asked the shopkeeper to identify them—thus maintaining a farce of justice when all the time he is alleged to have known the identity of those responsible for the crime.

The official police enquiry into the assault closed owing to lack of evidence. But on December 5, 1924, Doctor G. Donati, the editor of *Il Popolo*, the organ of the Popular Party, applied to the *Alta Corte di Justizia* (the Italian High Court) for a re-opening of the enquiry, and accused De Bono of himself being implicated. He also tabled other charges against the General.

A special Commission of Enquiry was instituted by the Court to examine the charges. Before this enquiry the two letters written by Perroni were revealed for the first time. Major Vagliasindi, who had received these letters, was called upon to give evidence, and he declared that when the police made a search of his house, they took all documents and correspondence, among them copies of the letters. Vagliasindi stated that he believed the search was made in order to seize all evidence against De Bono and Mussolini, but luckily he was able to hid the originals of these letters. He further declared to the Tribunal: "I will wait to produce the original documents until I am sure that justice will take its regular course and until all reprisals against those giving evidence against Fascism have been stopped. But it is not difficult for this Court even now to secure all necessary documents, including copies of these letters, if you will demand from the police all documents and copies of documents seized by them at my house."

The Commission of Enquiry did not, however, find it necessary to require the production of documents illegally seized by the police. Nor was an offer made by Perroni, who had led the assault and had since left Italy for France, to return in order to give evidence accepted.

Perroni wrote to the chairman of the Commission of Enquiry from Nice on April 15, 1925, stating that on March 15, he had called upon the Italian Consul at Nice and offered to give evidence. But the Commission contented itself with making enquiries concerning Perroni of the Consul, who answered that he did not know him!

In the absence of Perroni and of many relevant documents, the Court decided the charges were not proved and De Bono was acquitted.

In September, 1925 Perroni protested, in a letter which could not be published in the Italian press, but which was circulated in the anti-Fascist and European newspapers, that "the Consul at Nice did not find me only because he did not want to find me."

It should be mentioned that at this time many Fascists still retained a certain respect for the Italian Courts. They would carry out the orders of the Fascist machine, but if those orders brought them into conflict with the Courts, they gave their evidence truthfully—even to the extent of revealing plans which the Fascist authorities wished to remain secret. The fact that enough is known of the first attack upon Amendola to prove, conclusively, that the assault was carried out under the direct orders of the *Duce*, is due to this lingering respect for law and order at that date.

The whole tone of the press which was the mouthpiece of Fascism was, at that time, an incitement to violence against all who were enemies of the régime. Even if direct evidence of complicity did not exist, the statements made by the leading Fascist newspapers would constitute moral guilt against the Government.

Thus on August 23, 1923, the *Popolo d'Italia*, the newspaper which directly expressed the views of Mussolini, declared: "The deputy Amendola asks why the national militia is not disbanded now, when Fascism claims to have been popularly accepted by the people. To that gentleman who still walks without trouble in the streets of Rome we answer, 'The militia is maintained not against the people but, on the contrary, against the minority of dogs who are very cunning and discredited—dogs who are always traitors to Italy.'"

Later in the same article, the paper declared concerning Amendola: "Fascism is too generous to him, as it is too generous to other traitors we may name, such as Nitti, Albertini, Don Sturzo, Treves, Modigliana, Serrati, Turati and others. Oh! if the Fascists instead of being good and generous to these people will dispose of all these dogs who pester the nation. Fascism is now paying for this mistake of having a revolution at the cost of its heroic soldiers, but not at the cost of these dogs. But just to correct this mistake, and only for this, it is necessary that the militia should remain alert, and it may yet give a severe lesson to these four dogs who are not yet sufficiently *Clouées au poteau*."

On November 24, 1923, the *Idea Nazionale* declared that ex-Premier Nitti had been abandoned by public opinion and discredited, but "one thing may yet be done to him. A most primitive justice, but a very exemplary one—he had to be branded with hot irons, to make him a marked man." The same article continued: "It is necessary to make everybody understand, not by words but deeds, that Fascist generosity towards them (the opposition leaders) has gone so far as to leave them their lives, but this has been conceded on the understanding that they will be silent." Five days later five hundred Fascists ransacked the house of the ex-Premier, led by

the Secretary of the *Fascio* of Rome, destroyed the furniture and fired hundreds of cartridges. Fortunately the ex-Premier and his family were not in the house at the time.

It was a provocative statement in the *Popolo d'Italia*, since shown to have been written by Mussolini himself, which heralded the commission of Fascism's greatest crime—the murder of Giacomo Matteotti, a young man of thirty-nine who had sat in the Italian Chamber since 1919 as a member of the Reformist Socialist Party.

When many members of his party were content to accept the Fascist challenge in silence, Matteotti had shown himself to be the most bitter and fearless of all its enemies. In Parliament and outside, he led the fight to preserve those liberties which Fascism sought to destroy. And in the spring of 1924 he committed the "crime" of publishing, abroad, a complete exposure of the first months of the Fascist dictatorship and its methods.¹

Ignoring the dictates of personal safety, this most courageous of all members of the anti-Fascist opposition in the Italian Chamber followed up this exposure by delivering a speech in the Chamber on May 30, 1924, in which he denounced in scathing terms the intimidation and outrages which had disgraced the General Election of the previous April.

"For two hours he faced the clamour, the insults and the threats of the Fascist majority, interrupted at every minute, but tenaciously braving the storm and maintaining that the Fascist majority had no right whatever, morally or politically, to represent the Italian people. On his way out of the Chamber, Matteotti said to the deputy Cosattini: 'And now, get ready to deliver my funeral oration.'"

A few minutes after Matteotti had finished his speech, Cesare Rossi was heard uttering threats against the opposition leaders. "The Fascist régime," he said, "had made a great mistake in not having them shot at the outset; what it had failed to do then, it could do now; one day or another these gentlemen would suffer the fate of the gallows birds."²

Two days later, in the *Popolo d'Italia*, of June 1, came the article written the previous day by Mussolini himself, in the course of which occurred the famous threat: "Matteotti made a speech of an outrageously provocative nature which should deserve some more concrete reply than the epithet of 'band of scoundrels' which Signor Giunta flung at him."

This threat was repeated in the Chamber itself by Mussolini on June 6. In the course of an altercation with members of the Extreme Left, Gennari, a Left deputy, declared: "We are just out of prison and are ready to go back there for the sake of what we believe," to which the Prime Minister replied: "You would have got a charge

¹ *The Fascisti Exposed*, by Giacomo Matteotti. Independent Labour Party, London, 1924.

² *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 318.

of lead in your backs. We do not lack courage as we shall show you. There is still time and we shall show you sooner than you think."

During the afternoon of June 10—four days later—Signor Matteotti was attacked in Rome by a group of men in a motor-car and kidnapped.

"It was half-past four," stated a boy of twelve who was an eye-witness. "I was playing with my companions. Near us there was a motor-car, which had stopped just by *Via Antonio Scialoja*. Five people got out of it and began to walk up and down. Suddenly I saw Signor Matteotti come out. One of the men went towards him, and when near him, gave him a violent push, making him fall to the ground. Signor Matteotti called out. Then the other four came up; and one of them struck him a hard blow in the face. Then they took him by his head and feet, and carried him into the car, which came past us. So we were able to see that Signor Matteotti was struggling. Afterwards we saw nothing more."¹

That was the last seen of Matteotti alive. On August 16, the skeleton of this deputy who had defied the Fascist régime was found buried in a wood fourteen miles outside Rome.

This brutal crime aroused public opinion to such a pitch of excitement and antagonism against the Fascist régime that General De Bono developed the utmost energy in bringing the culprits to justice—seeking to arrange, as usual, that those guilty, for good and sufficient reasons, should escape, and that the men arrested should provide the police with an *alibi* without any of the facts becoming known.

Mussolini himself appeared before the Chamber shortly after the disappearance of Matteotti and declared fervently: "The guilty should be tracked down and handed over to justice." And he added: "The law shall take its course. The police shall bring the guilty to justice. More than that you cannot demand of the Government. This is an anti-Fascist and anti-national crime. And even more than horrible, it is a crime of humiliating brutality. In face of such deeds, there can be no hesitation. A distinction must be drawn between politics and crime."²

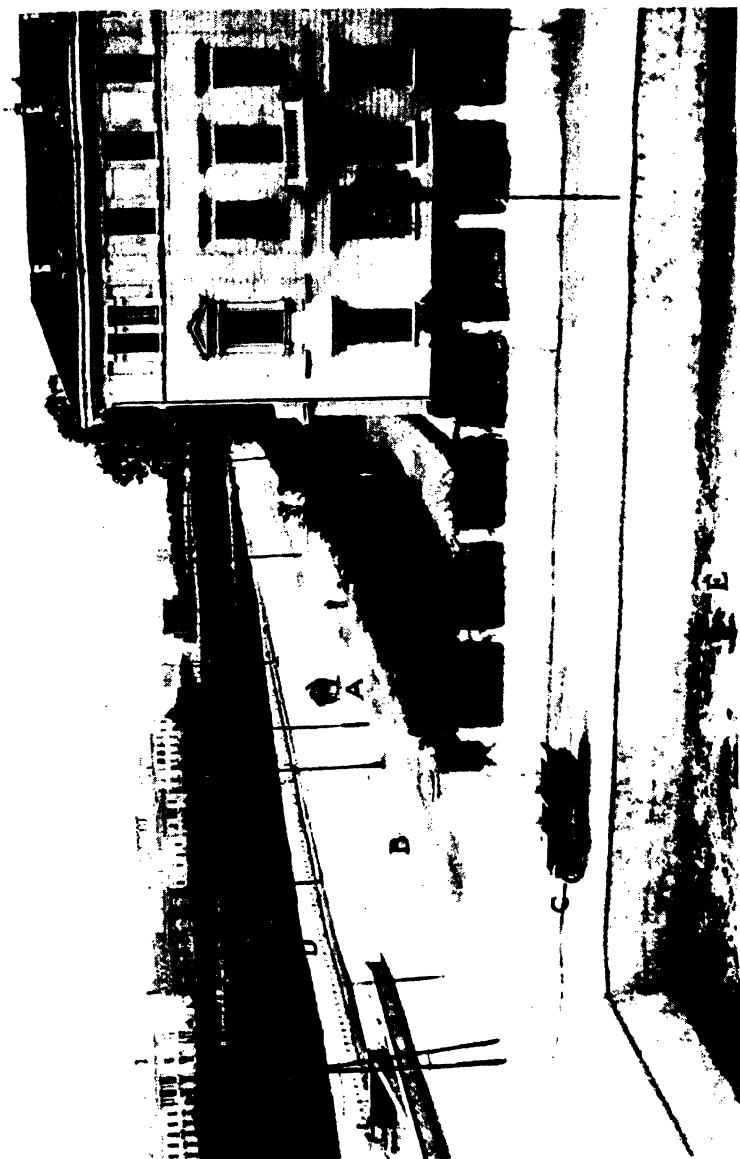
Following this speech, Mussolini sought an interview with Matteotti's wife. The following account of this interview appeared in the *Giornale d'Italia*, of June 15, 1924:

"When the unhappy lady appeared on the threshold, Signor Mussolini leapt to his feet and stood at attention. Signora Matteotti burst into sobs. Signor Mussolini, manifestly moved, said with firmness: 'Signora, I should like to restore your husband alive to you. You may be assured that the Government will do its utmost duty. We know nothing for certain, but there is still some hope.'"

That, at least, was the official version of the interview issued to the Italian press. But it is now known that immediately after seeing Signora Matteotti, Mussolini declared to Cesare Rossi: "For the

¹ Evidence given at the trial at Chieti. Reported in *La Stampa*, March 18, 1926.

² *Corriere della Sera*, June 14, 1924.



SCENE OF THE ABDUCTION OF MATTEOTTI AT ROME

moment there is nothing to be done. The lads have made too many blunders. There are already too many witnesses. I am powerless. De Bono is no good for anything. Too much bad blood is seething. All those who are under suspicion must be patient for a while. I must have my hands free to launch the counter-attack. The hour of vindication will come later."

As hours passed, it became obvious that the crime had brought Fascism face to face with a grave political crisis. There was even a possibility of the King disowning his Ministers. And there was more than a possibility, if justice was not speedily satisfied, of a rising against the régime which would sweep away the Government.

Under these circumstances, the arrests already mentioned were made. But facts were already in the possession of the Opposition which pointed clearly to members of the Government being implicated in the crime.

In these circumstances De Bono, who, not being personally guilty, was presumably acting upon instructions from above, permitted four of the five culprits to remain at large, arresting at first only one of those guilty of the murder—the leader of the affair, a man named Dumini. At an interview in prison, De Bono gave Dumini a guarantee that he would go unpunished on condition that he remained silent when questioned by any Court before which he might be brought.

Later, Dumini, in his evidence at the trial, stated that De Bono said to him: "If you know anything, deny, deny, deny. I want to save Fascism."

The others arrested were innocent and knew nothing about the outrage. They were not, therefore, in a position to incriminate anyone.

Public opinion remained angry and suspicious, and on June 16, Mussolini relieved De Bono of his command and sent him away from Rome. Following De Bono's departure, the activities of the police were speeded up, and two further and important arrests were made—Filippelli (who, it was later proved, had supplied the car used for the crime) being taken into custody in a motor-boat outside Genoa when on his way to France, and one of the five men who had committed the crime, Volpi, being arrested at Ballabio, near the Swiss frontier. The three remaining members of the murder-gang were arrested later, and all lodged in prison preparatory to the preliminary enquiry into the crime.

Further and more drastic measures were needed, however, before the threat to the régime could be side-tracked. For both the Opposition members of the Chamber, who were actively collecting evidence, and the public suspected that others had given the orders for the crime of which those arrested were accused. Mussolini and the Fascist High Command sought to gain time, therefore, and to draw a red herring across the path of justice by arranging the resignation of two high officials of the Government, whose departure from office

would enable them to be named as scapegoats within the party.

These two officials, upon whom public curiosity had already been directed, were Cesare Rossi, member of the Fascist Grand Council and head of the Press Bureau, whose office Dumini, one of those arrested, had frequented, and Finzi, Under-Secretary for Home Affairs. To them, in return for their sacrifice, Mussolini promised reinstatement as soon as the storm had blown over and the Government was once more safe. To Finzi, in addition, the *Duce* promised the appointment of Minister of the Interior. On this condition, Finzi wrote the following letter of resignation to Mussolini :

“ DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

“ I am informed that yesterday at a meeting of Opposition members my name was mentioned, if only indirectly, in connection with the horrible, vile and useless crime. In order that I may have full liberty to force my enemies to throw off their anonymity and publicly prove their calumnies, I beg you to accept my resignation.”

Rossi was not so amenable.

“ When I communicated to him the Prime Minister’s decision,” declared Acerbo, in evidence given on August 14, 1924, “ he protested violently, declaring his complete innocence, and saying that he would lose heavily by resigning. The Prime Minister again invited him to do so, pointing out that rumours concerning his relations with Dumini had become too persistent. Rossi refused to be calmed down ; he became violent, and abused the Prime Minister, who, he declared, was ruining him to satisfy four of the *canaille* of Montecitorio. Mussolini appealed to his sense of discipline, implying that he, Mussolini, was forced to do so by the political excitement of the moment. Then Rossi said : ‘ If it is necessary for you to have me arrested for the sake of party discipline, do so, but I owe myself the duty of defending my honour.’ The Prime Minister replied that it was not necessary for Rossi to be arrested, nor was there any need for any kind of heroic action ; all that was required was to clear the situation in view of the public excitement. Rossi went away saying that he was going to consult some of his friends.”

Later, Rossi placed his resignation in the hands of Mussolini.

On Sunday, June 15, Rossi, fearing arrest, went into hiding, after sending to Mussolini the following letter :

“ I have the impression from a number of signs that you have singled out myself as the one scapegoat in the reverse which has befallen Fascism. Scapegoat not only in a political and moral but also in a penal sense.

“ Now certain things can only be done if both sides agree. I absolutely refuse to agree. . . . In short, I must, at a moment like this, have evidence that you realise your duty of loyalty, not so

much towards me personally and my past record, as towards my position as collaborator who sometimes carried out illegal actions by your orders, and above all towards an elementary requirement of the *raison d'état*. If I do not receive this evidence, I will put into execution that of which I spoke to you this morning, and have worked out in the course of the day. Your cynicism, of which already you have given appalling proofs, is now aggravated by your complete loss of self-control at this moment when you should master the situation which is entirely of your own making. Should your cynicism cause you to order my being put out of the way either while I am in hiding or in the event of my capture, I warn you that none the less your own career will be at an end and the régime as well. There exists already, in the hands of trusted friends of mine, a detailed and documented report."

Finzi, the second scapegoat, also took steps to expose the truth concerning his resignation should he become the victim of Fascist violence. He, too, drew up a memorandum disclaiming all responsibility in the Matteotti murder, and defending himself against any charges that might later be brought against him. This, after showing it to several persons, he sent to his brother Gino in order that the latter should have precise instructions as to what to tell the judges in the event of treachery following his resignation.

On June 14, 1924, Mussolini had a warrant issued for the arrest of Cesare Rossi as one of the chief accomplices in the murder.

The reason which dictated this action against an old colleague and high official of Fascism was revealed by Rossi himself in a statement issued after his flight to France.¹

"Why did Mussolini have me arrested? Because he needed a scapegoat to protect himself against the accusations which would eventually come in regard to the murder," declared Rossi.

"I knew nothing of the preparations that had been made for the suppression of Matteotti. Mussolini knew very well that I knew nothing about them. That was one of the reasons why he chose me for the sacrifice—because he knew that I was not in a position to turn King's evidence. He had less to fear from me than from those who were actually his accomplices.

"When the Matteotti crime had aroused the indignation of the public, Mussolini felt that he would have to make some move towards placating the nation. For that reason he got Finzi and myself to resign our positions as being the two officials in closest contact with himself.

"... At that time I had no suspicion that Mussolini had actually ordered the murder of Matteotti. I held him culpable on the general ground that he had always been the prime mover in the acts of violence committed by the Fascist '*squadristi*.'

"I blamed him as being morally responsible, but I supposed that

¹ Published in *Daily Herald*, March, 1926.

the gravity of the crime had gone beyond his wishes. For me it was simply a political fatality and I wished to do my best to save the party from the ruin which threatened it. It was for this reason that I resigned as head of the Premier's Press Bureau. But had I known as much as I know now, I should never have thought of offering that sacrifice.

"Why did I attempt to evade justice by remaining for eight days in hiding?

"The answer is important. In the first place I must say that the police did not show any extraordinary activity in attempting to arrest me. On the evening of June 14, I wrote a letter to Mussolini wherein I held out to him as a last hope the prospect of sacrificing my own interests for the good of the party. As a result of that letter, on that same evening Mussolini sent me a representative with a message saying that the Premier wished me to remain in contact with him. Therefore he knew where I was.

"There was a warrant for arrest against me and he was Minister of the Interior. Why did he not insist upon the warrant being carried out? I will tell you why.

"Mussolini hoped that I would leave the country and seek exile abroad. In that way he could better exploit my actions in his own interest. That was the plan he followed a few days later in the case of Fasciolo, his private secretary. He knew that Fasciolo had knowledge of the criminal activities which had been organised within the party, and for that reason he sacked Fasciolo and ordered him to leave the country. Then he sent round rumours that Fasciolo had been implicated in the Matteotti affair.

"I might have left the country any day I wished. The frontiers were open to me and I do not think I would have had to bother about means of livelihood had I agreed to the idea. But though I had been willing to become a political scapegoat for Mussolini, I would not be a moral scapegoat for anybody.

"I decided therefore that I would give myself up to the prison authorities, and my aim in doing so was that I might be able to use the machinery of law and justice to clarify the whole position. I have come away from Italy because the machinery of justice functions there no longer and because I feel the urgent necessity of appealing to a fairer bar of justice.

"Conditions in Italy under Fascism have made it utterly impossible for me to defend myself. I cannot use the press, because it is absolutely controlled by Mussolini. I cannot even defend myself in the presence of my own friends, because the law recently passed on the privileges of the Prime Minister forbids anybody even in private to say anything against Mussolini. Naturally I could not defend myself except by abusing him. Therefore if any words of my own defence happened to be heard by a third party I was liable to arrest and imprisonment for a term of thirty months."

Rossi was in due course arrested and remained in prison for eighteen months, during which he was denied the right of trial. On December 2, 1925, together with Marinelli and Filippelli, two other prominent Fascists arrested in connection with the murder, he was released, following the finding of the judges at the preliminary enquiry into the crime. These three men were released under a political amnesty which covered all crimes except actual murder.

"I have been amnestied for a crime of which I am innocent," declared Rossi. "I have protested over and over again against the amnesty, saying that I wished to be tried, but I am denied the right to appear in the dock. Not only that, but they have twisted a clause of the Italian Penal Code in order to make it impossible for me to appear as a witness in the Matteotti trial. Imagine it! The Government says that I am a political hypocrite, that I organised the affair, and yet they will not allow me to come into the witness box to tell them what I know about it.

"Why? The answer is obvious.

"Certain actions and attitudes of Mussolini must be incredible to those who have no knowledge of his character. Mussolini had a marvellous faculty for playing the most diverse and contradictory parts one after the other. His line of conduct is always broken and zig-zag. He is always restless. One day he says one thing is white, and the next day he says it is black. One moment he is crying for vengeance against his opponents and the next moment he is pleading for peace.

"I saw a good deal of Mussolini during the days that immediately followed the murder of Matteotti. Immediately after the crime had become known his attitude was merely cynical and ironical. On the Wednesday evening, the day after the murder, he sneeringly said to me: 'The Opposition have been looking for Matteotti all day and now they have gone to search for him in the sewers.'

"On the Thursday, however, he was informed that the number of the motor-car was known and the car itself would soon be discovered. His whole attitude was then changed. He became nervous and frightened."

What are the facts behind the murder of Matteotti, and this maze of intrigue, make-believe and counter-plotting by which it was sought to save the face of Fascism?

The Italian public believed that the crime had been instigated, if not actually carried out, by direct orders of the Italian Government. And the evidence now available certainly suggests that the Italian public was right. Whoever issued those orders—whether Mussolini himself or some colleague emboldened by the Prime Minister's reiterated threats of violence against Matteotti—the murder was a crime planned and carried out by accredited members of the Fascist Party, and the criminals were systematically shielded from being brought to justice by the power of that party, which knew that the appearance

in the dock of those responsible would lead to revelations which might well destroy the régime.

Matteotti was kidnapped by a band of five Fascists headed by Amerigo Dumini, the other four members of the group being Albino Volpi, Poveromo, Viola and Malacria.

On June 8, two days after Mussolini's "we will show you" threat had been uttered in the Italian Chamber, Dumini telegraphed to Volpi in Milan, asking him to come to Rome with a capable *chauffeur*. The day previously Marinelli had left for Milan carrying money which he handed over to Volpi for the use of that Fascist and his three companions during the journey to Rome. Marinelli remained at Milan, thus providing himself with an *alibi* covering the time when the crime was to be committed.

On June 9 Dumini borrowed a motor-car from Filippelli, and on the following day the four conspirators from Milan met him in Rome. On that same afternoon the attack upon Matteotti occurred.

It may legitimately be doubted whether the orders Dumini had received included murder. The Public Prosecutor at the preliminary enquiry which preceded the public trial of the accused, took the view that the murderers had intended only to abduct the Reformist deputy, but that Matteotti struggled and was, accidentally or otherwise, stabbed with a dagger while in the car.

Faced with the necessity for getting rid of the corpse, whether unexpected or not, the conspirators drove into the Roman *Campagna*, some miles from the city, and there scooped out a rough grave in a ditch and buried the body, where it was found two months later.

These facts are not in dispute. The real question which the preliminary enquiry and, later, the trial had to discover was under whose orders the five murderers were acting in thus assassinating one of the outstanding critics of the régime.

The chief anxiety of the Italian Government was to break the chain of evidence which linked Dumini with Mussolini, and to throw the blame for instigating the murder upon the scapegoats—Finzi and Rossi—whose guilt had been arranged in advance to draw off public indignation from the head of the State.

"Dumini," declared the judges of the accusing section in their pronouncement of December 1, 1925, "though playing a predominant part in preparing and carrying out the crime, could not have undertaken it on his own initiative, as is shown by the following facts: (1) Dumini had charge of providing his accomplices with food, lodging and a daily allowance of money, of paying for the hire of the car and for a plentiful supply of petrol; (2) acting under orders, he had taken part in previous assaults on political men; (3) given his moral character and intellectual level, he was not a political personality capable of undertaking on his own initiative lawless actions involving the responsibility of the party as a whole; nor was he a witless and

ignorant subaltern capable of acting from blind fanaticism, unmindful of the risk of forfeiting valuable patronage."

According to these judges, Dumini had acted under the orders of Cesare Rossi and Giovanni Marinelli, Treasurer of the Fascist Party, both members of the "*Quadrumvirate*" of the Fascist Party.

The question of whether Marinelli and Rossi, assuming their guilt, had in turn acted on their own initiative, or upon suggestions from their superiors—in a word from Mussolini himself—was not mentioned during the preliminary enquiry; despite the fact that in many quarters the complicity of the *Duce* in the plot was being actively discussed, the Public Prosecutor made no attempt to clear Mussolini's name.

The question of whether the gang had received orders to abduct Matteotti, or to murder him, was settled at this same enquiry by a ruling that Dumini and his accomplices had been told only to abduct the murdered man, and that the murder taking place in the hurry and excitement of the moment, it was not premeditated. Therefore, reasoned the Public Prosecutor, there was no order to kill.

Mussolini himself, at this point, publicly accepted this explanation advanced by an official who was a brother-in-law of Farinacci, General Secretary of the Fascist Party, in the course of a statement appearing in the monthly magazine *Gerarchia*, in which he declared: "The involuntary character of what took place is henceforth proved and demonstrated historically and juridically. The truth is that the practical joke of June, 1924, degenerated into a horrible tragedy, independently of, or rather, against the will of, its authors."

This view the judges also accepted. On December 1, 1925, they pronounced judgment that Dumini and his companions did not intend to kill Matteotti, but only to carry him off for a time. The murder was therefore not premeditated.

It followed that the order for abduction, which was now the only charge, involved a political crime. And all political crimes, except murder, were covered by the amnesty of July 31, 1925. Therefore the charges against Rossi and Marinelli of having instigated a murder were dismissed, and they were acquitted.

There is some ground for believing that the acquittal of Rossi was not distasteful to Mussolini, who imagined that the restoration of his liberty would prevent Rossi from giving any further evidence relating to the events preceding and immediately following the murder. But Rossi immediately fled from Italy, and while in exile, prepared two more memoranda, one dated February 11, 1925, and already quoted, and another dated April, 1927. Both of these declarations sought to prove the direct responsibility of Mussolini for the organisation of the Fascist political "*cheka*," and his personal responsibility both for the murder of Matteotti and the assaults upon Amendola.

Of the five men who carried out the murder, two were in the front seats of the car and could not be implicated in the killing which had

taken place inside. They were therefore adjudged guilty of abduction only and liberated under the amnesty. The remaining three prisoners, including Dumini, were also amnestied on the charge of abduction, and it remained for the preliminary enquiry to decide upon the one remaining count—that of “unpremeditated manslaughter.”

The maximum penalty for this crime under Italian law is twelve years' imprisonment, but none of the three accused would confess to having struck the fatal blow, and the culprit being unknown, the maximum penalty was reducible to six years' imprisonment each. Four of these six years were already covered by the amnesty, and the three men had already spent eighteen months in prison awaiting trial. It was therefore certain that the only prisoners to be placed on trial out of all concerned in the crime would be released almost immediately, whether adjudged guilty at the public trial or not.¹

Even so, the Fascist authorities did not permit the trial to take place in Rome. It was announced that it would be held at Chieti, a provincial city, and there it was opened in March, 1926, with a minimum of publicity in the Italian press.

Realising that these developments, after all that had occurred, were but setting the stage for a legal farce rather than a fair trial of her husband's murderers, Signora Matteotti wrote the following letter to the President of the Court withdrawing from the case :

“The murder of Giacomo Matteotti was a tragedy for me and my children, but still more for free and civilised Italy. I thought at first that justice would not be sought in vain. This trust was the only consolation left me in my deep sorrow. For this reason I stood as a plaintiff.

“But the real trial was gradually lost sight of in the course of legal proceedings, and as a result of the recent amnesty, what remains to-day is only an empty shadow.

“I did not feel rancour ; I did not seek revenge ; I merely asked for justice. Men deny it to me, but history and God will grant it.

“I therefore ask permission to withdraw from a trial which has ceased to concern me. My legal advisers, who have always been in agreement with me, will give a legal form to my decision.

“I beg your Lordship to exempt me from the terrible ordeal of appearing in court. In my sad and lonely life, my husband's memory strengthens me to bring up my children to follow in the footsteps of their noble father. To consent to appear would seem to me a desecration of that memory. For Giacomo Matteotti, life was a terribly earnest thing.

“VELIA MATTEOTTI.”

¹ These facts are quoted from *The Fascist Dictatorship* by Gaetano Salvemini (Cape) in which those interested will find a fully documented report of the crime and subsequent events.

At the end of the trial, the jury acquitted the two men who had occupied the driver's seats in the car, and brought a verdict of guilty against Dumini, Volpi and Poveromo, who were sentenced to six years' imprisonment, but liberated two months later.

Such are the facts concerning the death of Matteotti. What were the effects of this crime upon the fortunes of *Fascismo*—and of Italy?

"Up to June 1924," writes Professor Salvemini, "Italy was still in law, if not in fact, a country whose citizens without distinction of party enjoyed the same personal and political rights. If as head of the Fascist Party, Mussolini 'authorised' behind the scenes the acts of violence of his followers, as head of the Government he officially disavowed them.

"On the Matteotti crime Mussolini could not hide his own complicity and that of other leaders of the party. He could not pretend that it was due to the ungovernable restlessness of some local leader. He could not play the double game of authorising and disavowing. He had to throw in his lot once and for all with the extremists against the moderates.

"The open break with the old régime of liberty which followed the Matteotti murder might perhaps have come to pass under the pressure of other circumstances and by other ways as a logical development of the Fascist system. But in actual fact it came to pass in connection with the Matteotti murder. To save themselves from being swamped in the wave of moral indignation aroused by the crime, Mussolini and his associates had to block all the constitutional channels by which that indignation might have found vent. The freedom of the press was officially abolished in order that the press might not be able to discuss the Matteotti murder. The large-scale operations aimed at terrorising the country, which seemed to have ceased after the massacres at Turin and Spezia, began again after the Matteotti murder. The amnesty of July 31, 1925, demolished the whole edifice of judicial procedure in order to withdraw from the normal jurisdiction the prime movers of the Matteotti murder. The barefaced and systematic acquittals of Fascists in clearly proved cases of guilt date from the Matteotti murder. The Opposition deputies were driven out of the Chamber and all parliamentary liberties were violated because the Opposition persisted in regarding Mussolini as guilty in the Matteotti murder. Freedom of speech, of association, of assembly, and the elections for local government have been abolished since the Matteotti murder."

It is not going too far to say that while the carefully staged edifice of intrigue and subterfuge associated with the crime succeeded in its main object, which was to prevent the ultimate guilt from being proved against whoever, within the Fascist Party, had inspired the pre-meditated assassination of Giacomo Matteotti, it is the Fascist Government which will be arraigned in history as responsible for the crime.

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One further fact only concerned with this murder need be mentioned here. This is the fate of Cesare Rossi, who to the end of his days of liberty abroad claimed that he had been made the innocent scapegoat behind which other and more illustrious figures shielded during those days when it seemed as if Fascism itself might fall before the public indignation over this brutal crime.

After Rossi's flight from Italy, the Fascist Party realised how damaging were the statements which this former official was issuing from his place of exile. A plot was therefore organised by *agents provocateurs*, with the assistance of the Italian police, to induce him to return to Italy, where he could be silenced.

By means of forged letters he was called to Lugano, and there, with the assistance of a woman from a family he had counted among his friends, he was lured across the Italian frontier, arrested and taken to Campione, where a detachment of *carabineers* was waiting to take him to Rome and prison.

On September 28, 1929, an official statement informed the world that Cesare Rossi had been condemned to thirty years' imprisonment with hard labour as a traitor to Fascism, and for his activities against the security of the Fascist State. According to this statement, Rossi confessed that he had written his famous memoranda against Fascism and Mussolini at the suggestion of anti-Fascists who had proposed to him, among other things, that an attempt should be made upon the life of the *Duce*.

It is interesting to note that the verdict was delivered by the Special Tribunal after a trial which lasted only two hours. No witnesses were called except the Director of Police. The accused made no attempt to defend himself, except at one point during the reading of the charges against him, when he cried out, "No, no," but was silenced by the President of the Court. He then turned to the judges and exclaimed: "It is too much."

Rossi, in his prison-house, as he reflects upon the years that must pass before he regains his freedom, may at least feel grateful that the tyranny which he once served and afterwards exposed, granted him his life.

The two trials—of Cesare Rossi for criticism of the régime, and of the five murderers of Matteotti for a brutal murder carried out against an unarmed man—considered together, form a fitting commentary upon "justice" in Fascist Italy to-day.

CHAPTER XIV

METHODS OF THE TERROR

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."

JOHN MILTON.

IF the murders of Matteotti and Amendola stood alone, they would form an indictment which any Government might well shrink from attempting to defend at the bar of world opinion. Unhappily for Italy, these two outrages, which attracted considerable attention both because of the eminence of the victims and the complete nature of the evidence concerning the manner of their deaths, are but symptomatic of the condition of sustained, directed and systematic tyranny to which the Fascists have considered it necessary to resort in order to maintain their régime.

As we have seen, the laws now in force in Italy provide judicial sanction for unlimited control over the liberty, movements, occupation and opinions of all within the borders of that country—Italians and foreigners alike. But the existence of laws alone, or even of the Special Tribunal, is not in itself evidence of tyranny. Many countries have from time to time found it necessary to arm the forces of law and order with drastic punitive powers which were only intended to be employed as a last resort. How has the Fascist régime used its powers?

In Italy, since 1923, all the fundamental liberties have been abolished. The expression "freedom of speech" cannot be applied to any phase of life in Italy to-day. Only one opinion is tolerated: Fascist opinion. Sentences are frequently inflicted for verbal offences against the *Duce*, the régime, the authorities, institutions or even the emblems of the Government. Even criticism of the trade unions (which, following the systematic destruction of the property of the regular Labour unions and the arrest of many of the leaders, are Fascist corporations) is punishable by law. "We are not far from the days of the Emperor Caligula," an eminent Italian Professor told me, and an examination of the terrible facts in this chapter suggests that he did not exaggerate.

"Those who believe in good faith that Fascism is defending Europe against Communism, do not reflect that Fascism is already Communism; that is to say, a compulsory and despotic levelling of all consciences, the forcing upon men of an obligation to move and think according to the will and the wishes of one party and one man. An inquisition and a despotism exercised at the caprice of a man or a party, mortify the spirit, crush the conscience and depress the moral life of a people."¹

In Italy to-day any person may be arrested, imprisoned or deported without trial—and without even being told the crime with which they

¹ Professor Arturo Labriola in *Review of Reviews*, September–October, 1927.

are charged. It is forbidden for anyone to leave the country, even for the purpose of reaching a land where work is more easily found than in over-populated Italy. No peasant may migrate from the country to a town without a police permit. It is forbidden for any professional man—lawyer, doctor, journalist—to practise his profession unless he is acceptable to the Fascist Council controlling his profession. No person suspected, upon even the slightest evidence, of being an opponent of the existing régime, can secure the necessary permission. Thus even the means of livelihood are withheld for political reasons. It is forbidden to publish any newspaper or printed matter whatever which is not of a Fascist complexion. Foreign newspaper correspondents must conform to the requirements of the censorship, under penalty of expulsion. No one suspected of holding opinions adverse to the ruling party may receive or send any correspondence or be in communication with the outer world. No non-Fascist, however eminent, may hold any Chair at an Italian University unless prepared to remain silent and act as if approving of Fascism. Anyone refusing to give evidence against persons accused before the Fascist Tribunals (even if a close relative of the accused) is subject to severe penalties.

By such systematic stamping out of every opinion except Fascist it has been made almost impossible for any non-Fascist to prosper in modern Italy—and quite impossible for any anti-Fascist to live in peace. Many of those who were not prepared to hold and express opinions dictated by Signor Mussolini, and who could do so, have fled the country. To-day the fight for Italian freedom goes on, not only within Italy, but also in Paris, in Brussels, in New York, where many of the greatest Italians of their generation dwell in exile, awaiting the day when conditions will permit them to return to their native land. If that day is long delayed, the intellectual life of Italy will pay a terrible price for the régime which has robbed that country of many of its most courageous and brilliant men.

This is a heavy indictment to be framed against a European nation—a nation supreme in art and literature, and with a proud history. A nation, moreover, which under the Fascist régime has become conscious of a destiny which will carry it to the very forefront of world Powers. Unfortunately, there is ample evidence available—evidence which cannot be denied by even the most perfervid apologist for the Fascist régime—to support the charges made.

The Fascist Minister of Justice, Signor Rocco, has declared in the Chamber that "only the Fascist authorities are competent to decide which, and in what degree, any given form of political organisation is dangerous to the régime." Thus the decision which may send a man or woman to the isles of deportation for three or five years, is made upon the personal and uncontrolled judgment of officials. A teacher in school, a lawyer making a speech, an author at work on a novel, workmen talking in a café about low wages—all may, without

knowing it, come within the category of political criminals through the arbitrary decision of some minor official.

Some of the decisions of the Special Tribunal have been equally arbitrary. To belong to any political party other than the Fascist Party is a grave crime, severely punished by the Fascist judges. In fact it may fairly be stated that this Tribunal exists to punish Italians not for criminal acts but for holding, or being suspected of holding, opinions unfavourable to the régime.

Numerous instances of the severe sentences passed by the Tribunal for "crimes" peculiar to modern Italy might be cited. The *Corriere della Sera* of October 25 and 26, 1927, reported the trial of fourteen Communists of Lugo.

"On March 1, 1927, the Communist Alfredo Tamburini died of tuberculosis at Voltana di Lugo. His comrades seized the opportunity of the funeral cortège on the following day to improvise a subversive demonstration. Incited by them, a certain number of working people left work and joined the procession, wearing red carnations in their buttonholes."

As a result of this crime the Special Tribunal on October 25, 1927, sentenced three persons to five years, five persons to two years, two persons to one year's imprisonment as "having taken advantage of the funeral to stage a subversive demonstration and thus make propaganda for the doctrine and programme of the dissolved Communist Party."¹

On November 13, 1927, the same newspaper reported as follows:

"The Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State tried Mariano Graziano and Giorgina Rossetti, of Mongrando, on a charge of conspiring to change the Constitution of the State and to stir up civil war by means of clandestine and seditious publications. Graziano and Rossetti, who were betrothed, are described in the police reports as members of the Communist Party, known for the propaganda which they make among the working classes of the province of Biella. Copies of a Communist newspaper were found at the house of the man, and leaflets of a seditious character, printed by Graziano, were found at the house of his fiancée. On examination Graziano admitted having printed and distributed seditious pamphlets among his fellow workmen, but denied that his fiancée was cognisant of what he was doing, or that she was a Communist. 'Then how,' asked the presiding judge, 'did a great part of the seditious material come to be found in the house of Rossetti?' 'Because the material was mine,' replied the defendant, 'and I was unable to keep it at home, as my family refused to have it there.' Rossetti denied being a Communist, and said she knew nothing of what her fiancé was doing for Communist propaganda. Three *carabineers* repeated that both Graziano and his fiancée were Communists. The Tribunal sentenced them both to eighteen years' imprisonment."

¹ Reported by Professor Salvemini in a letter to *Manchester Guardian*, May 7, 1928.

The sentence pronounced upon the woman was heavier than would otherwise have been the case owing to her refusal to give any evidence against her fiancé.

In January, 1928, twenty Communists of Florence were tried for holding a meeting in the house of one of their number on October 13, 1924—two years before the Communist Party became an illegal organisation in Italy! Several youths armed with revolvers attended the meeting, which discussed the proposal of setting up armed bands on the Fascist model. The amnesty of July 31, 1925, wiped out this, with all other political crimes. Yet in 1927, the twenty were arrested. At their trial in January, 1928, the Public Prosecutor propounded the following theory:

"It is true that in July, 1925, an amnesty was granted, but it must be borne in mind that the crimes of conspiracy and that of setting up armed bands are permanent—that is, they endure up to the moment when the culprits give explicit proof that they have renounced their crime. The onus of proof lies with the defendant."

On this ground he asked for the condemnation of fifteen of the twenty defendants, beginning with the deputy Signor Damen, for whom he asked ten years' imprisonment. The Tribunal acquitted nine of the accused, and in compensation increased Signor Damen's dose of imprisonment to twelve years.¹

Among the fellow-prisoners with Emilio Lussu, the former deputy who escaped from the island of Lipari in July, 1929 (in company with Professor Rosselli and Francesco Nitti), was a peasant who had for many years earned a living by hawking cheap clothes. This man had never taken any part in politics, but was well known in the district in which he lived for his noisy speech and for the persistence with which he shouted his wares. One day, trade being bad, the hawker had walked through the streets shouting that he was selling silk muslin at a very cheap price. The word "muslin" is in Italian "*mussolina*," and that simple fact proved his undoing. He was denounced as a propagandist who, under the pretence of ordinary trade, was seeking to bring the name of the *Duce* into contempt, and thus bring about a revolt against the Fascist régime. For this "crime" he was brought before the Special Tribunal, where it was held that, owing to the similarity between the name *Il Duce* and the words actually shouted by the hawker, the charge had been proved. He was imprisoned first in Italy, and later sentenced to deportation to the island of Lipari for five years.

Another man was sentenced to several months' imprisonment for

¹ Professor Salvemini, in *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 265, points out that the amnesty of December 22, 1922, wiped out all crimes, including murder, if committed in pursuit of a Fascist aim. A second amnesty, proclaimed on October 31, 1923, "was not so far-reaching, but wide enough to put an end to the judicial enquiry into the Misuri, Nitti and Amendola affairs." On July 31, 1925, a third amnesty wiped off the slate all political crimes, except murder. This amnesty was announced two months before it took effect—during that time Fascists had known they were free to commit any violence they wished with impunity.

"offences" against Mussolini; the "offence" consisting of comparing the *Duce* with an ex-Premier of Italy!

On November 17, 1930, the Special Tribunal passed sentences of fifteen years' imprisonment and perpetual deprivation from holding any official position in Italy upon Manlio Rossi Doria and Emilio Sereni, two professors of agricultural science at Naples. Both men were charged with being Communists and with "collecting funds and information of a Communist nature" during visits to London and Paris which they had earned by winning Government scholarships.

Francesco Nitti, a lawyer and a nephew of the ex-Premier of Italy, was first placed under police surveillance, and later arrested and sent "by administrative order" and without trial, to spend five years' in exile on the islands. His "offence" was that he held the memory of Matteotti in such high esteem that he had visited the murdered Socialist's widow (an act of friendship only discontinued when it became obvious that by so doing he was endangering her liberty) and had twice attempted, on the anniversary of the murder, to place a bunch of flowers on the spot where Matteotti's body was found.

Francesco Nitti was arrested at 6.30 a.m. on the morning of December 2, 1926. Three detectives called at his apartment, awoke him from slumber, and ordered him to dress and accompany them to the police station. There he was informed that he was under arrest and would be sent to prison.

An hour or two later, he was taken in a taxi-cab (at his own expense) to the Regina Cœli (Queen of Heaven) Jail, where he remained for three weeks. Still he had no knowledge of the "offence" for which he had been deprived of his liberty.

"One morning, after my daily 'walk' in the prison courtyard, a warder ordered me to follow him to a room on the first floor of my division. At a table in the middle of the room was a man in dark clothes. He had a heap of typewritten papers before him.

"'Are you Francesco Nitti, the son of Vincenzo?' he enquired.

"'Yes.'

"'Then this is for you,' he said, handing me one of the papers.

"I glanced through it quickly. It was a document stating that, by virtue of the special legislation enacted for the security of the Fascist State, I had been sentenced to five years' deportation to a convict colony. It charged me with having committed 'subversive acts against the political and economic institutions of the State,' and of having at various times manifested the intention of modifying these institutions by violent means.

"The paper was signed by the Secretary of the Fascist Party of the Province of Rome, the Public Prosecutor, a colonel of the Fascist militia, a Police Commissioner and a colonel of the Military Police. It was dated December 1, the day before my arrest.

"When I had finished reading it, I asked the official :

" 'Can you tell me why I have been sentenced to five years' deportation without even having been examined ? ' "

"He shrugged his shoulders.

" 'The law provides for no examination,' he replied. 'All you can do is to appeal to the Minister of the Interior within ten days from to-day.' " ¹

The journey from Rome to the island of Lampedusa, where Nitti was to serve his sentence of *confino*, began on December 18 and ended on the 27th. The prisoners crossed Italy on one of the cellular prison wagons described elsewhere, handcuffed and chained. And in regard to the duration of the journey, the batch of political deportees of which Francesco Nitti was a member were fortunate.

"Extraordinary measures had been taken by the authorities to transport us as quickly as possible to our destination. As a matter of fact, it took us 'only' ten days to arrive at Lampedusa, while ordinarily convoys of prisoners often spend thirty, forty and even sixty days on the way to the island. The authorities were in a hurry because all the prisons in Italy were full at the time and they had to make room for more prisoners." ²

Christmas Day, 1926, the exiles spent in the big brick prison at Girgenti, fifteen deportees being crowded for six days into a cell which was meant to hold half-a-dozen men at the most.

"We obtained permission from the Superintendent to buy better food, and attempted to arrange a little dinner and be gay. For a while we talked and sang. But soon silence fell upon us and all night long we vainly tried to forget our misery in sleep, stretched on the filthy straw.

"At last, at four o'clock in the morning of December 27, we left Girgenti for Port Empedocle, a little town on the Sicilian coast, where we were to embark. A tiny steamer, the *Ustica*, named after another convict island, was waiting there to take us to Lampedusa. The night was stormy and we were thrown about in the hold of the frail vessel and drenched with the water that flooded her decks. I lay on the floor until morning, listening to the crash of the seas against the ship's sides." ³

Thousands of political "suspects" have passed along that same road from their homes in Italy to the islands of deportation during the past eight years ; the arrest of Francesco Nitti, and the steps by which he reached the island of Lampedusa (from which he was later transferred to Lipari) are typical of the fate which awaits the politically "suspect" in Fascist Italy.

The suppression of intellectual freedom, other than political, under

¹ Francesco Nitti in *Escape* (Putnam), 1930.

² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

the decrees passed to control those permitted to enjoy employment by the State, or in the professions, is equally drastic in its effects.

An interesting example of Fascist thoroughness is afforded by a judgment given in March, 1929, by the Council of State—the highest tribunal in Italy—presided over by Senator De Vito, former minister in the Nitti Government.

The judgment concerned the dismissal of a Government official named Mario Maiuri, an engineer, for expressing anti-Fascist sentiments in a private letter which was opened by the police while in the post. This letter Maiuri had written to Guglielmo Ferrero, the famous Italian historian, who is well known for his anti-Fascist opinions and who was at the time living close to Florence in a villa which was under the strict surveillance of the police.

In the letter Maiuri asked for advice concerning a novel which he was going to publish entitled *The Conspiracy of Catiline* and which dealt with the character of the old Romans. At the same time, in the course of the letter, the writer thanked the historian in advance for his advice, which would be, in his opinion, more valuable than any other opinion which could be obtained at the present time in Italy.

Following the interception of the letter, an enquiry was opened by the police. It was found that the letter contained phrases which revealed a critical attitude to the statesmen of the existing régime in Italy. (This was a police decision and quite unjustified on the contents.) One sentence in the letter suggested that, in the opinion of Maiuri, "the old Romans showed more sincerity than the present-day makers of history."

As a result of the enquiry Maiuri was dismissed from the Government service. He appealed against the decision to the Council of State, Councillor Bezzi being the State prosecutor at the hearing of the appeal. After deliberation the following pronouncement was promulgated, upholding the dismissal :

"Once it is admitted that the political authority, for reasons of State, is justified in opening and reading letters entrusted to the post, it cannot be denied that for the protection of these same interests use may be made of what has been learnt from the opening of the letters, and that as a result the competent authority may take whatever action it deems necessary for the protection of the same interests. The Legislature (article 51 of the Royal Decree dated December 30, 1923, No. 2690, modified by Royal Decree of January 6, 1927, No. 57) defined as a manifestation against the political instructions of the Government all acts or facts, which reveal a thought or conviction ; it is not necessary that such manifestation should be public or taking a definite form. It is only the administration which is competent to judge and examine without interfering with the competence of the State in the matter of legality."

¹ The same iron law is applied to foreigners in Italy. Many cases are upon record of the citizens of other countries who have experienced the severity of Fascist justice in defence of the régime.

A typical example is afforded by the arrest and imprisonment, by the Fascist police, of a Swiss railwayman named Peretti.

Peretti was arrested on April 20, 1929, when leaving a train at Milan railway station. His disappearance caused anxiety among his work-mates, and when enquiries made both in Switzerland and Italy revealed no trace of his whereabouts, anxiety became general among the population of the Tessin canton, where he lived.

The Italian police, in reply to repeated enquiries, declared that they knew nothing about him. Even the Swiss consul at Milan could not, for some time, obtain any information which would throw light on the disappearance. Representations made to the Swiss Government were followed by telegraphed enquiries to Milan and Rome. Government action was successful—the Italian police finally admitted that Peretti had been arrested in Milan because he had criminal relations with anarchist circles, and that he was in prison as a political offender.

That Peretti was, in fact, guilty of plotting violence against the Fascist State is in the highest degree unlikely. The fact that he was eventually sentenced by the Special Tribunal at Bellinzona, cannot—in view of the methods of these bodies—be accepted as proof, while the fact that the Swiss Ambassador engaged a lawyer to defend him and the government of the Canton of Tessin sent a police official to watch the case, suggests that his countrymen had grave doubts about his guilt. Further, the attitude of the Fascist authorities themselves cannot be held to have inspired confidence in their judicial methods.

Peretti had always lived a very retired life, and had never taken any part in politics. Hence the surprise of his friends when they learnt that he was a dangerous anarchist. When it became known that the Italian Government had refused permission for either the lawyer engaged by the Swiss Ambassador, or the police official mentioned above, to visit the prisoner, rumours began to circulate that Peretti was either undergoing torture, or was already dead.

Such a statement concerning the police methods of a European country sounds fantastic to those living under a democratic form of government. But in Switzerland the reports caused renewed anxiety, and the matter was raised at the meeting of the Swiss National Council on June 18, 1929, by M. Borella.

In reply to the demand for information, a member of the Swiss Federal Council revealed that as a result of energetic representations made by the Government, it had been possible to arrange for M. Nuni, the Swiss Consul at Milan, to visit the prisoner on June 15. According to the official report of this visit, M. Nuni was allowed to see the prisoner only upon the express condition that the conversation should take place entirely in Italian and that no question should be put to Peretti regarding the circumstances of his arrest.

The Consul was therefore only able to ask Peretti how he was, and whether anything could be done for him. The prisoner replied that he had no complaint to make and added some small requests concerning his family.

In due course the trial took place, and Peretti was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for underground propaganda against the Fascist State.

When Professor Carlo Rosselli was in the prison of Masra Carrara in 1926, *en route* for exile on the island of Lipari, he met there, as a fellow-prisoner, an aged Swiss engineer who had been arrested for an offence against the Government and who was eventually sentenced by the Special Tribunal to one year's imprisonment and fifteen years' exclusion from Italy.

A French citizen named Merigi was arrested at Livorno for expressing an opinion unfavourable to Fascism and the *Duce*, and later condemned to six months' imprisonment and to a fine of one thousand *lira*. For the same crime an Englishman employed at Robert's Pharmacy at Florence was expelled from Italy.

No protest is possible by the Governments whose citizens may thus suffer ; for the sentences are in accordance with the Fascist law, which is, of course, binding upon native and visitor alike wherever the Italian flag flies.

Many further cases could be quoted to reveal that intensive political persecution, directed to suppress all freedom of opinion and speech, is an integral part of Fascist methods of government. During the first two years that followed the passing of the law for the Defence of the State in 1926, the Special Tribunals set up by Mussolini for judging political offenders heard over 6000 cases, and sentenced over 1500 persons to between 2500 and 3000 years of penal servitude.¹ Founded to regularise by law the rough justice meted out by irresponsible Fascist hooligans during the earlier years of the régime, these Tribunals remain at once a source of wonder and concern to jurists of Western Europe, and all attempts to bring pressure to bear upon the Italian Government to modify their procedure in favour of those charged before them have failed. The Special Tribunal remains to-day the "gag" in the mouth of Italian freedom.

Before turning to other aspects of justice in Fascist Italy, as exemplified by the actual working of the judicial machinery of the State, one further case may usefully be quoted, if only because it concerned the bringing to judgment of four ardent Fascist sympathisers.

One night in 1930 the body of a rich landowner and chief of the local *Fascio*, was discovered at Massenzatico, near the town of Reggio Emilia. He had been murdered by shooting and blows from a bludgeon. Both the local police and Fascist militia got busy hunting down

¹ By the middle of 1930 the Special Tribunal had inflicted sentences totalling more than 6000 years of imprisonment. Up to that date more than sixty women had been denounced to the Tribunal and twenty-eight had been sentenced for political "offences."

the culprits. They attributed the crime to anti-Fascists, and several persons were arrested and tortured in prison in efforts to secure a confession.

Meanwhile rumours began to circulate, and later became too widespread to be disregarded, that the police had not arrested the real murderers. As gossip spread the incriminating evidence passed from mouth to mouth the names of four men public opinion held to have committed the deed were openly bandied about. They were Lusetti, Mussini, Domenichini and Capiluppi, all well-known local Fascists and members of the Fascist militia. In the end the police, forced to act by the gathering feeling of the townspeople, had to arrest these men and bring them to trial.

There was little room for doubt, from the very moment of their arrest, that these men were guilty. The motive for the crime had been a dispute between the murderers and their victim concerning a municipal service connected with the milk trade. Both sides had desired to secure for themselves the profits of the trade, and the four Fascists had committed premeditated murder to remove a competitor.

At their trial before the Assize Court at Reggio Emilia the accused pleaded not guilty, their defence being that they had killed Lasagni, their victim, in mistake ; their intention had been to " teach a lesson " to an anti-Fascist named Ettore Miselli, but owing to an unfortunate physical resemblance between the two men and the darkness of the night, they had attacked the wrong man.

All the witnesses glorified the Fascist merits of the murderers, and the trial ended with very mild sentences of imprisonment.

One of the lawyers for the prosecution, Signor Farinacci, ex-Secretary-General of the Fascist Party, attacked the family of the murdered man, which had insisted upon justice being done. " The dead," exclaimed Farinacci, " does not belong to his family. He belongs to Fascism. But we are inclined to excuse his widow and daughters who have uttered here words of accusation and demanded revenge."

And when at one point in the evidence the widow broke down in court, the President ordered the police to remove her. Whereupon Signor Farinacci observed cynically : " It is all prepared, we are at the last scene of the play."

The concluding words of this Fascist counsel must surely be unique in the history of murder trials. " I say to the accused : ' Have no resentment against anyone,' " he declared. He turned to the jury. " And to you, sirs, you will give them back to their heroism, to their faith, to their honour, and they will be purified by the sorrows of the trial through which they have passed." (These phrases are textually reproduced from the censored reports of the trial which appeared in the Italian newspapers.)

Evidence concerning the most terrible phase of the treatment of political prisoners under Fascism—the revival of methods of torture,

both in order to extract information and as a concomitant of Fascist justice—will be given in a later chapter.

The ill-treatment of prisoners has as its counterpart the "reprisals" against their families by which the Fascist Government seeks to torture by proxy those anti-Fascists who have succeeded—despite the penalty, if caught, of six years' imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 *lira*—in leaving the country without permission.

The Fascist authorities make frequent allusions to the *Fascios*, or branches of the Fascist forces, as an army on a war footing, bound ruthlessly to oppose both anti-Fascists within the frontiers of Italy and enemies abroad. And it is an old but discredited custom of warfare for armies to hold innocent persons as "hostages" when the real enemy is beyond their reach. This system of "reprisals" Fascism has faithfully practised, mostly at the expense of defenceless women and children whom prominent public men antagonistic to the régime had left behind in the perhaps justifiable belief that the sins of the fathers would not be visited upon either their wives or the young.

Among the "hostages" who have thus suffered from Fascist persecution was the wife of Alberto Giannini, one of the editors of *Il Becco Giallo*, a well-known satirical weekly in pre-Fascist days, and which since the flight of Giannini has been produced in Paris and smuggled into Italy, where it is as big a thorn in the side of Fascism as was *La Libre Belgique* to the Germans in occupied Belgium during the war.

Alberto Giannini was guilty of no crime except withholding his support from the Fascist Government. But next to the machinery of police, militia and special tribunals, the most powerful weapon of *Fascismo* is the control of the press.

All Italian newspapers are propaganda sheets for the Government, just as all journalists must be supporters of Mussolini, otherwise they cannot secure the necessary licence to be journalists. And just as all books published in Italy are censored. The visitor to Italy may still buy newspapers called *La Stampa* and *Corriere della Sera*, newspapers which once ranked among the foremost and most fearless in Europe. Now only the names remain—the papers must voice the opinions of the dictator. They have all been forcibly "bought," and most of their former owners and editors are in exile.

It is said that Mussolini himself directs the Prefects who each day ring up the editorial offices and give to the obedient editors the "key-note" for the day's news, and that the word "keynote" is *Il Duce's* own expression for the official guidance so thoughtfully provided for what he calls the "orchestra of the press."

In the ranks of a completely servile press there was no place for the biting satire of *Il Becco Giallo*, nor for the independent views of Alberto Giannini. The paper was suppressed. But Giannini was not to be silenced so easily. He remembered how the Belgians had

managed to spread the truth under the very eyes of the German military machine, and he escaped to Paris—there to continue the production of the paper which is the despair of the Italian authorities, for by some miracle thousands of copies continue to circulate in the land of *Fascismo* every month.

That the Fascist machine would bow to defeat in such an impudent contest of wits was perhaps too much to hope for. Giannini was in Paris and beyond their reach. But Signora Giannini, his wife, and his three children remained in Rome. Fascism struck at its enemy by the only method open to it—Signora Giannini was placed under “open arrest,” with a close guard of Fascist militia watching her every movement, and the comings and goings of her children. She had been seriously ill for a long time, and had never taken part in politics, but despite these facts, the policy of surveillance and isolation was persisted in for many months.

When, on account of her health, it became necessary for her to go into hospital, the Fascists followed her there, and kept her under strict guard. Thus she died, the last person she saw being the Fascist guard which represented the authority that had refused her permission to join her husband and which would not permit her husband to come back to her side even when death was near.

Upon receiving news of her death, Alberto Giannini wrote a letter, dated January 28, 1930, which reveals how the Italian Government fights its opponents :

“ I am in my fourth year of exile,” he stated. “ My house in Italy was twice ransacked by Fascists—the first time after the attempt of the Irish woman, Miss Gibson (upon Mussolini’s life), and the second time after the attempt at Bologna. What they could not destroy they stole, among the loot being jewellery belonging to my wife, industrial share certificates worth some thousands of *lira*, and which represented all my savings, and even small things belonging to my daughter aged ten. The paper which I edited was suppressed ; I myself was condemned to five years of ‘ home arrest ’ (police surveillance).

“ Faced with these conditions, I decided to leave the country. I was an officer of the Italian Mountain Artillery during the war, and it was, therefore, not difficult for me to pass over the Alps and to reach French territory and Paris, where I began anew my journalistic activities.

“ But my old mother, my wife and my three children had to remain in Rome, and it was against them that Mussolini began to use his vengeance. Just because I succeeded in escaping his clutches, he ordered his police to maintain most severe surveillance over my family. During three years the door of my house was guarded day and night by Fascist agents. The police followed my wife and eldest daughter everywhere. Orders were given to them not to leave Rome, even for a few hours, without the permission of the police. If, despite the ban upon correspondence, any letters succeeded in reaching the house, all

members of my family were cross-examined about the contents, and the house searched.

"As a result of this continual strain, my wife suffered a breakdown in health and became so ill that she had to be taken to hospital. During the long months of illness, the police continued the same strict surveillance, never leaving her side. They evidently imagined that she was simulating illness to avoid such 'open arrest' for the purpose of planning a flight from Italy, but the illness killed her. She died with my name on her lips, and after praying that God would give her an opportunity to see me once more and to embrace me for the last time.

"My three children are still in Rome. Their mother is in her grave; father in exile. The only one to look after them is their grandmother, aged 73, who is forced to give English and French lessons in order to secure necessities for this family; while I myself am in such a position that I cannot do for them any of the things which my responsibility demands.

"You might imagine that the police of Mussolini had done enough. It is a mistake to think so. The surveillance was not abandoned after the death of my wife, but was extended to all the children, and the police now accompany them to the school, guard them during play-hours, at meal-times and during all their walks. Friends who, following the death of their mother, tried to help the orphans, fall under this surveillance. Such is the situation of my family in Italy.

"Mussolini, who through his emissaries has many times tried to persuade me to give up my journalistic activities as an opponent of the Fascist régime—a régime of violence and arbitrary government—kept my family after my escape as hostages, and by such methods tried to intimidate me and blackmail me."

To that letter, it is only necessary to add that before her death, Signora Giannini repeatedly applied for permission to leave Italy with her family. That permission was always refused. Yet it must be repeated that Giannini had committed no crime. No charge was ever made against him except the damning charge of being an opponent of the Fascist régime, and leaving Italy without permission. On the contrary, he was offered a position on the Fascist press, which he refused.

Another victim of this Fascist system of hostages is Signora Cianca, the wife of the former editor of *Corriere della Sera*, who is now living in exile in Paris. All Signora Cianca's correspondence is censored before she receives it. Her daily comings and goings are constantly watched by police agents. When in the summer of 1930 she took her children to a seaside town and hired a rowing boat for their amusement, the ubiquitous police agents stepped up and forbade the party to leave the shore, lest they should attempt to cross the Mediterranean in the frail craft and join the husband in France!

A long list of such instances might be compiled. Even when Fascism relents and issues passports to these harassed wives, the

children are often detained so that Fascism may still exert pressure upon its opponent if the need arises. This was the fate of Signor Treves, the Italian Socialist leader, whose wife was permitted to leave Italy and rejoin her husband in 1930, but whose children were forced to remain in Italy for some time after their mother received her passport.

Commenting upon this system of "hostages" which is to-day a feature of justice in both Russia and Italy, the *Manchester Guardian* declared (August 15, 1929) :

"One of the worst evils of every terroristic dictatorship is that not only its critics and enemies but all who are related to them, or even remotely connected with them, are in danger of arrest, internment, exile, imprisonment or even death. In this way the Terror may even make itself felt beyond the frontiers of the country it afflicts. Russians and Italians abroad have to be careful what they do or say if they have relatives at home. The other day three Italians escaped from an island prison. The wife and brother of one of them have, so our Paris correspondent has reported, been arrested. Escape is thus made doubly hard—every political fugitive from Russia or Italy knows that his flight may mean misfortune for his friends. The Terror takes hostages, although the taking of hostages belongs to war and not to peace. And neither in war nor in peace is it lawful. But just as law is over-ridden by warfare, so is it over-ridden by the Terror also. Much has been written about the suffering caused by the Terror. As far as we are aware, there has been no attempt to estimate the destructive influence of the Terror upon the sense of law, which, after all, is one of the foundations of civilisation itself."

The arrest of the wife and brother of one of the three exiles who escaped from Lipari, mentioned by the *Manchester Guardian*, referred to the detention of Signora Rosselli and Dr. Nello Rosselli.¹ It is only too probable that Signora Rosselli, the English-born wife of Professor Carlo Rosselli, would have shared the unhappy experience of Signora Giannini and Signora Cianca had not the British press publicly challenged the Fascist Government, which thereupon yielded with that grace which Signor Mussolini knows so well how to employ upon occasion.

News of the arrest of Signora Rosselli and Dr. Nello Rosselli, brother of Professor Rosselli, reached London in a message which appeared in *The Times* of August 14, 1929 :

"Professor Carlo Rosselli, who recently escaped from the island of Lipari, where he had been confined as a political prisoner by the

¹ Dr. Nello Rosselli had previously been sentenced to five years' exile as an opponent of the Fascist régime and had actually served forty days' imprisonment and eight months' exile on the island of Ustica.

Fascist Government on the charge of having assisted Signor Turati, the Socialist leader, to escape from Italy, has received news that both his wife and brother have been arrested. Signora Rosselli was a British subject by birth. She was Miss Marion Cave, the daughter of Mr. Ernest Cave of Uxbridge, in Middlesex ; and after obtaining her degree at Bedford College served as a teacher of English at the British Institute in Florence.

"According to the news reported to have been received by Professor Rosselli, his wife was at Courmeyer when the news of her husband's escape became known. She was arrested on July 31, and taken to Aosta, where she spent the night in the police station. Later, on account of her weak state of health, she was moved to an hotel, where she is under direct police supervision and frequently subjected to interrogations.

"Dr. Nello Rosselli was engaged until the day of his arrest by the *Regia Scuola Storica* to make researches in the State archives concerning Anglo-Italian relations during the *Risorgimento*. He was arrested at Fiuggi on July 28, and sent to the Island of Ustica on a charge of having helped his brother to escape. The charge is of interest, as in view of the impossibility of any unauthorised person resident in Italy to communicate with a *confinato* it has been generally assumed that the escape of Professor Carlo Rosselli and his companions had been organised from abroad.

"Ustica is generally considered the worst of the convict islands, and only those political prisoners who are regarded as unusually undesirable are sent there. Among the twenty of this category who are now confined on Ustica is General Bencivenga, at one time secretary to General Cadorna and later President of the Roman Press Association."

Upon the publication of this latest example of Fascist reprisals, the Editor of the London *Daily News* addressed the following telegram to Signor Mussolini :

"English public anxious at reported imprisonment Signora Rosselli, born British subject. *Daily News* is confident head of Italian Government will make clear circumstances of her arrest and her present position."

Three days later, on August 17, 1929, came the reply, which took the form of a complete denial and was issued by the Italian Embassy in London :

"In reply to your telegram addressed on the 14th inst. to Signor Mussolini, I am instructed to inform you that, contrary to the statements published in the French and English press, Signora Rosselli has not been arrested, or molested in any way.

"There is, in short, no foundation whatsoever for the statements mentioned and no denial of them could be too emphatic. Signora

Rosselli is entirely free and nothing whatsoever has been done to restrict her full liberty."¹

Commenting upon this statement, the *Manchester Guardian* said :

"The reports that have reached England described the arrest of this lady, her detention in a prison for a night, and her removal to a hotel, where she is closely watched. What is her position at the moment? Is she free to leave Italy? If not, why not? It cannot be supposed that the Italian Government wishes Italy to be regarded as one of those countries where a foreign woman runs risks of ill-treatment if she marries a native because there are no guarantees of personal liberty and the law either does not respect any personal rights or is unable to protect them.

"The incident brings out the importance of the subject lately discussed by the Congress of University Women at Geneva, that of the international status of women," added the newspaper. "The law that makes a woman the subject of the State to which her husband belongs has been the cause of great cruelty and injustice in times of war, but if the methods now in force in Italy become common, that law will be the cause of new injustice in times of peace. The Rosselli incidents are a painful revelation of the tenacity with which the Fascist Government clings to those methods. Professor Rosselli was sent to the Lipari Islands because he helped Signor Turati to escape from Italy. After two years' imprisonment he has now escaped from the islands, and the Government pounce on his brother and send him to the worst of the penal islands. So the unending sequence proceeds. Why should a civilised Government have desired to prevent Signor Turati from leaving Italy? On what civilised principle does a Government send a man to a harsh and cruel exile because his brother has escaped from prison? Signor Mussolini likes to remind Italy in his speeches of the glories of the Rome that taught the world respect for law. Some of his acts, unfortunately, remind the world of the days when Radetzky was holding Milan and Ferdinand was ruling Naples."²

Two days later, on August 19, came definite news of the release of Signora Rosselli, who, according to the Fascist Government had never been arrested "or molested," in a cable which she sent to her father.

The cable read :

"Returned yesterday to Courmayeur ; set free ; health fairly good ; will write. MARION."

"This message," commented the *Daily News*, "disposes effectually of the Embassy's statement that there had been no arrest."

¹ *Daily News*, August 17, 1929.

² *Manchester Guardian*, August 17, 1929.

To this refutation of the official statement issued by the Italian Embassy, Professor Carlo Rosselli was able, the following day, to add some further facts : in the course of a letter to the *Daily News*,¹ in the course of which he stated :

" The facts are that my wife was arrested in Courmayeur on July 31, that she was immediately brought to Aosta, and that she was there in prison during one night and one day, in a common cell together with prostitutes and other unfortunate women of the same world. Since she labours from heart weakness (*mytralic stenosis*) and is in a state of pregnancy, the chief of police, under urgent appeals from my mother, allowed my wife to dwell at the Hotel della Corona, Aosta.

" There she was under strict police surveillance still on August 14. She was being steadily questioned by two general inspectors of the police. She was not allowed to get or send letters. But she could keep with her our two-year-old boy. Though a courageous and high-minded woman, she was tired by so many examinations and rather depressed, especially in the last days.

" If Signor Bordonaro (Italian Ambassador in London) is bold enough again to 'emphatically deny' these statements of mine, I am ready to bring indisputable proofs of them before any jury of English gentlemen."

The indignation produced in this country by the publication of the true facts, and the news, from Signora Rosselli herself, that she had been released, would seem to have impressed the Fascist authorities. Or perhaps they had never intended to treat Signora Rosselli, who, remember, was an English-born woman, as they treated Signora Giannini, and hundreds of other wives of Italian exiles who could not claim the sympathy of some democratic land that gave them birth. Not only was she set at liberty, but a passport to leave Italy was granted to her a few days later.

Owing to Signora Rosselli's English birth, it is possible to present this example of Signor Mussolini's policy of "hostages" in detail. In most cases those concerned are Italians, and the story does not have the same happy ending.

In the course of the enquiries into this arrest, an official of the Italian Embassy in London, in answer to a question as to whether she was free to leave Italy, was reported to have declared that Signora Rosselli "enjoyed the same liberty as any other Italian subject. She might apply like other Italians, men or women, in such a case for permission to travel abroad, and her application, like theirs, would be pronounced upon after due consideration of all the circumstances."

If by this it was intended to imply that permission to leave Italy may be easily obtained, the statement is not in accordance with the known facts. Nor is there any necessity to impose a penalty of six

¹ August 20, 1929.

years' imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 *lira* for leaving the country without permission, if in fact that permission may readily be obtained. (Incidentally, it should be remembered that so jealously does the Fascist State guard its right to control the movements of its subjects that the frontier guards are armed, and, as is the case in Soviet Russia, entitled to shoot at sight anyone attempting to reach foreign territory.)

Proof that it is almost impossible for anyone who is not *persona grata* with the authorities to leave Italy except by clandestine means is to be found in the experiences of those who have tried in vain to do so, and in the migration statistics published by the Italian Government.

In 1924, the year following the March on Rome and the setting up of the Dictatorship, there were 239,322 emigrants from Italy to European countries, and 125,282 to trans-oceanic countries, principally to America. In 1926 the respective figures had dropped to 79,772 and 70,794. By 1929 the total migration to all countries had fallen to about 90,000 in all.

The fact that the person who attempts to leave Italy without permission is free from political motives will not save him if he is caught. The migration laws outlined in a previous chapter are applied with severity to *all* who leave the country without permission, whatever their reasons.

Thus two workmen at a seaside town near Genoa, unable to find work of any description in the district in which they lived, secured a rowing boat and with great foolhardiness, considering that neither of them had any knowledge of seamanship, set out in an effort to reach the French coast with the intention of joining the many thousands of Italian labourers who have found profitable work in that country.

They had no means of judging their direction, and at the end of two days landed at a spot which they discovered to be Italian soil. They were immediately arrested and, under cross-examination, made no attempt to conceal the fact that they had hoped to reach France and there to work for at least a season. For this "crime" both were sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

Signor Degasperi, until November, 1926, a deputy and Secretary of the Christian-Democratic Party, was arrested on March 11, 1927, the official *communiqué* stating that he had been taken into custody while "attempting to cross the Jugo-Slav frontier." But a further *communiqué* reporting his trial at Rome, dated May 28, revealed the fact that Degasperi had been arrested at Florence railway station, which is some distance from the Jugo-Slav frontier. To explain this geographical discrepancy, the *communiqué* stated that when questioned he had produced an old passport. It was not denied that he had given his correct name to the police; the suggestion that he had intended to leave Italy without authority was a mere "suspicion," unsupported by evidence. Despite this fact, however, Degasperi was brought to trial and sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment.

In passing sentence the judges made the following important ruling concerning the "crime" of attempting to leave Italy without authority :

" Attempt at illegal expatriation is a new offence in our legislation. The law of public safety now in force has for its aim the general interest, and not the protection of the rights of individuals. It has been drawn up with a delicate sense of political wisdom in order to safeguard the State and the Nation from the nefarious conduct of citizens who, by fleeing abroad, can damage and undermine the destiny and good name of the country they have renounced. This necessitates Government intervention to prevent expatriation without permission. It is the right of the Government to decide at its own discretion as to the personal qualities of the man who wants to go abroad and his reasons for so doing. Degasperi wanted to go abroad for political reasons, which meant not that the fear of reprisals from his political opponents made him want to leave the country, but that it was his own spontaneous desire to withdraw from the life of his country in which he had participated as the principal exponent of one of the largest parties. There is no evidence that Degasperi was subjected to political persecution, but even supposing that Degasperi felt himself to be persecuted and therefore wished to go abroad, the fact remains that the Government is all the more determined to supervise expatriation and to grant or withhold permission to leave the country, the more the mentality of those who in their political past were opposed to the régime might give rise to the expectation that their actions will be harmful to the interests of the nation."¹

The Court of Appeal upheld the verdict on the following grounds :

" The Government has the right and the duty to protect itself against its enemies. Therefore it is determined to supervise, *i.e.*, to allow or prohibit, the departure of those whose past activities are incompatible with the régime. All the more so if their mentality gives grounds for thinking that there is danger of their acting in a manner prejudicial to the national interests. Such is the present case, since Signor Degasperi was secretary of the Christian-Democratic Party which opposed the National Government."

Despite the activities of both frontier guards and Courts, however, the trickle of unauthorised emigration out of Italy continues. Every week, some Italian citizen, goaded to desperation by the *vendetta* maintained against non-Fascists, makes a desperate bid for freedom. And not all of those who flee are actuated by political motives.

" Last week some climbers on their way back to Zermatt met a party crossing a difficult glacier pass from Italy"—stated the *Manchester Guardian* (August 25, 1930). " One of them was a

¹ *Il Tevere*, June 13, 1927.

• young woman lightly dressed, with tattered shoes, carrying a nine-months-old baby. It does not need much imagination to realise under what stress she must have suffered in her own country before she would hazard her own life and her child's in such an adventure. Some six hundred of her fellow-countrymen have, it is believed, been similarly successful."

The ordeal to which the Fascist Government considers it necessary, in the national interests, to submit its subjects before granting passports, was clearly shown by a sensational crime which occurred in Paris on September 14, 1927, when Sergio di Modugno, a young Italian workman aged twenty-five, shot and killed the Italian Vice-Consul, Count Nardini, in desperation after vainly trying for two years to secure permission for his wife and child to join him in France.¹ For this crime he was acquitted by a French Court.

As a reprisal for the murder, di Modugno's wife, together with their two-year-old child, was arrested and after being taken from one prison to another for a month, sentenced to deportation to Lipari for a term of five years.²

In many such cases of illegal expatriation, savage reprisals have been taken against relatives or friends who remained in Italy. No excuse is accepted as sufficient cause for leaving Italy without permission. No reply is given to the question "By what right does the Fascist Government seek to control the movements of its citizens and to turn their country into a prison house?"

Among those who have succeeded in leaving Italy in defiance of the Government is Signor Filippo Turati, former leader of the Reformist Socialist Party, whose position in Italian politics corresponded with that occupied by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in this country. Turati, at the age of seventy and in ill-health, found life unbearable, and, permission to leave being denied to him, he fled from a country in which "it is both a crime to remain with dignity and to leave with liberty."

After months of close surveillance and persecution, visited alike upon himself and all who associated with him, Signor Turati decided to escape by sea.

"My departure took place on the night of December 11, 1926, near Savona," he afterwards recorded. "With a very rough sea and under a starless sky, we navigated our little motor-boat for long quite uncertain of the course. Finally, on the morning of the 12th, we saw ahead of us Corsica, though the wind and waves had carried us towards the opposite coast from that which we had intended to strike. We disembarked at Calvi. The following day I took a boat for Nice, and from thence left at once for Paris.

¹ Concerning di Modugno's efforts to secure a passport for his wife, the *Popolo d'Italia* (September 16, 1927) wrote: "His wife, who had given grounds for suspicion in regard to her political behaviour, remained in Rome, having been refused a passport for abroad."

² At the time of writing Signora di Modugno is interned on the island of Ponza.

"Parri, Rosselli and some others accompanied me from Savona to Calvi. I had begged them not to come. They insisted on doing so, not because their presence was necessary, but simply out of devoted friendship. When we landed at Corsica, we were received in a most friendly manner by the authorities, but naturally we had to declare our identities, for which reason I again begged Rosselli and Parri not to return at once to Italy. They wished to do so at all costs. I learned later that a press correspondent at Calvi had hastened off at once to Bastia to telegraph the information to his paper. Parri and Rosselli left for Italy that Sunday on the same motor-boat, and landed on the coast of Tuscany, where they were immediately arrested by the Customs officials.

"My statement that I had no need of accomplices may seem in contradiction to those of Parri and Rosselli, who claimed to have organised my flight. Each nobly takes upon himself the greater responsibility in order to shield his comrades. The truth is that the decision was made by myself alone at the last moment, and carried out without assistance from my friends, in the humiliation of finding myself, with no legitimate cause, spied upon and watched like a criminal. This abuse of power, and the refusal to issue me a passport, was contrary to the custom of any civilised country and to the law of Italy itself. My act was one of legitimate reaction to illegal treatment."¹

Another prominent Italian politician who succeeded in escaping from Mussolini's prison-house, Signor Arturo Labriola, writes in the *Review of Reviews* (September 15, 1927):

"I asked Mussolini to give me a passport. He refused it. Then I decided to organise an 'illegal' flight, despite the risk of imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 *lira*. I love my country. Away from it I am unhappy. I think there is no greater honour than to live and to die for it. But a country without freedom is no longer a Fatherland. It is a prison, and from a prison one has the right to escape. My escape was not easy. I was for five days at sea in a little fishing boat which some trusty men, in danger of their lives, sailed first to Sardinian and then to Corsican waters. I landed on the Corsican coast at night and barely escaped drowning in a marsh. I lost all my papers, baggage and money. For a man of over seventy, of peaceful temperament and with the habits of a student, this was no small adventure. Yet I am glad I did it and that I succeeded in getting away. I have regained my freedom and can work for the freedom of my country."

Equally instructive was the fate which overtook an Italian-born American citizen whom Francesco Nitti met as a deportee on Lipari.

¹ Letter to *Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1927. For the subsequent trial of Carlo Rosselli and Parri for assisting Turati to escape, see Chapter XV.

“ I recollect that one day there appeared amongst us a young man from Calabria who was almost blind. He was a naturalised American citizen. While serving in the American Army during the war, he had been badly gassed and had nearly lost his eyesight in consequence. He was receiving a pension from the United States Government as an American war veteran,” Signor Nitti has recorded.¹

“ But how did you come to be deported ? ’ we asked in amazement.

“ I returned to Italy a few years after the war,’ he explained, ‘ wishing to revisit my mother and home in Calabria. I had never belonged to any political party, but when the “ Blackshirts ” began exercising their reign of terror in my native village, I and some friends tried to oppose them. Finally, I had to seek refuge in the mountains, abandoning my wife, whom I had married in America, and my young children. After months of misery, I was arrested and sentenced to deportation to the island of Favignana, where the prisoners were brutally mistreated by the Fascist guards. The Fascist authorities refused to recognise my American citizenship, affirming that I was Italian because I had been born in Italy. I appealed to the American Embassy in Rome, and was informed that they were willing to undertake steps for my liberation, but that if I were set free, I should immediately be expelled from Italy as an undesirable alien. That meant leaving my mother, my wife and my children behind me, so I decided it was preferable to serve my sentence. We are, at least, living in the same country. The authorities would never allow my old mother to join me in America, and it is very doubtful whether they would grant a *visa* to my wife and children.’ ”

Fascism seeks, by similar methods of intimidation and terrorism, to silence those of its nationals abroad who may imagine that they are free to criticise the régime.

A law of January 31, 1926, says :

“ Citizenship is forfeited by all who commit or abet abroad any act calculated to disturb public peace in Italy, or from which may result injury to Italian interests, or to the good name or prestige of Italy, even if the act does not constitute a crime. To the loss of citizenship may be added the sequestration, and, in the gravest cases, the confiscation of property.”

As this law did not, apparently, inspire sufficient fear in the hearts of Italians living abroad to silence their tongues, a further ordinance was passed, dated November 25, 1926, whereby any Italian who, outside the kingdom “ spreads or communicates under any form false, exaggerated or tendentious rumours or news about the internal conditions of the country, to the detriment of the foreign credit or prestige of the State, and whose activities are prejudicial to the national interests,” is liable to a period of five to fifteen years’ imprisonment in addition to loss of citizenship and confiscation of property.

¹ *Escape*, by Francesco Nitti, p. 166-7.

But in order to punish anti-Fascists under this law, it is first necessary to entice them back to Italy. And as few of them have any intention of returning to their native land while Fascism is in power, some new methods were evidently needed to silence criticism abroad.

The next method attempted, therefore, was fear and threats. Thus concerning Professor Salvemini, one of the most prominent and well-informed of all the exiled fighters for the freedom of his country, the *Impero*, January 25 and February 17, 1926, declared :

“ For Salvemini there is only one solution : an infamous death. We hope that the blessed hand of a holy madman will find abroad the means of choking this shameful fount of treachery. Cold steel is what he needs.”

And again :

“ No one need be surprised if some Fascist of heart and courage would lose patience and send him to reflect in a calmer and more peaceful world.”

The Milan weekly *Il Torchio*, the organ of the Fascist College of Journalists, June 19, 1927, writes :

“ Forward, Fascists, you who love the *Duce* with passionate self-surrender, cross the frontiers. Cross them in your tens and hundreds and thousands. Scour all the roads of the world. Search every country ; thrust your bayonet points in everywhere. Your weapons will be stained with dung, with poison and with blood. The thing to do in the sacred names of Italy and of the *Duce* is to strike. Without pity and without truce, remorselessly once and for all to hunt down all false Italians, all feigned Italians, all ex-Italians. Wherever they are to be found they must be struck down. Their extermination must be inexorable and absolute. Not even the memory of them must survive. Only thus can Italy be relieved of a permanent incubus, only thus can she be saved from the abyss. The safety of the *Duce* demands it. Fascists, forward, kill ! ”

To translate these heroics into action is somewhat difficult. Other nations are apt to frown upon mass murder campaigns instituted by foreign Governments against persons living within their frontiers. Therefore the Fascists have had perforce to find an outlet for their indignation in blows struck at the exiles through families and friends who remain in Italy, or through economic pressure exerted by Italian organisations abroad against those of its nationals suspected of anti-Fascist sentiments.

Signor Melchiorri, in the *Popolo di Roma* of September 28, 1926, expounded this revised method, when he wrote :

“ Those who have gone abroad must be hunted and tracked down, and life must be made impossible for them. Every

- commune ought to be obliged to post up a list of all those who have gone abroad for any reason whatever, together with the addresses of their families. Perhaps the danger of popular reprisals on their families will restrain these bastard sons from further activities against their country."

Even correspondence with any "suspect" living abroad, whether a relative or not, may be dangerous. A statement issued by the anti-Fascist Vigilance Committee at Brockton, Massachusetts, U.S.A., revealed that in June, 1927, Michele Nazzoni, an American citizen of Italian birth residing at Brockton, had received a letter from his sister in Italy, telling him that the authorities of the commune in which she lived had several times warned her, and threatened to deport her to the islands unless her brother ceased all anti-Fascist activities in the United States.

An Italian citizen named Ramieri, a native of Molfetta in Apulia, migrated seven years ago to the United States and found work at Brooklyn. In Italy he left his four children, promising to return and fetch them as soon as he had saved sufficient money. But, his opinions being anti-Fascist, the Italian Consul at New York refused to grant passports for the children. Whereupon the father appealed first to the American Consul at Naples, and then to the Italian courts.

The reply of the Fascist authorities was to place the children under special police supervision. The father, in despair, returned to Europe intending to make a personal appeal to the Italian Government, but upon arrival he found that his name was entered in the Fascist "black book" and that he would be arrested if he attempted to enter Italy.

"He was able, however, to let his children know that he was in France near the frontier. Thereupon the children—a girl of 16 and three boys aged 15, 12 and 8 respectively—made up their minds to escape. Eluding the police, they made their way through half the length of the Italian peninsula, crossed the Alps near the sea and joined their father. . . . Now, armed with the permission of the American authorities, Ramieri has returned to the United States, minus most of his savings, but plus his children."¹

Side by side with this policy of open terrorism exists the hidden pressure of Fascism exerted, by economic, social and financial means, against its opponents abroad.

"The Fascist League (in the U.S.A.) has orders to stifle at any cost opposition which might injure Mussolini's reputation in the United States; and this duty takes a place of major importance beside the work of Italianisation. It is in the performance of this task that the League goes to extremes which are quite undreamt of by most Americans." Thus Mr. Marcus Duffield writing on Fascist influence in the United States in *Harper's Magazine*. And the writer

¹ *Review of Reviews*, November, 1929.

reveals some interesting details of how the hand of Fascism stretches across the Atlantic :

" The first and most powerful weapon of the *Fascisti* here is economic. Put baldly, they know that they can silence most of their foes if they can starve them. Most Italo-American firms do part of their business in Italy, notably the banks, importers, steamship lines and a few manufacturers. Unless they are obedient to Mussolini, their business in Italy will promptly be ruined, since *Il Duce* has industry well under his thumb. The Italian Chamber of Commerce in New York City is, as obviously it has to be, pro-Fascist. These Italian firms in America, therefore, are perforce subject to the orders of the *Fascisti*. This makes possible the employment of both the boycott and the lock-out against critics of the régime.

" It works in this manner : an Italian-language newspaper or magazine which incurs the wrath of the League loses its advertisements and is likely to die. If an Italian grocer is on the Fascist black-list his trade disappears. If the employee of an Italian firm speaks against Fascism he loses his job. Naturalised American citizens are subjected to this treatment equally with immigrant residents."

Following this exposure of the activities of *Fascios* formed in the United States, the Italian Ambassador in that country made a speech in which he claimed that the protests which had been voiced in that country were the work of a few renegade Italians. But, he added, it would be wrong to attach importance to the Fascist organisations abroad in which inexperienced young people gave themselves up, at times, to deplorable demonstrations.

This disavowal was followed by the news that all the 120 Italian *Fascios* in the United States of America had been dissolved, following orders from Rome.

In other countries the same silent pressure continues, taking many forms. Fascism claims the right to stifle criticism not only within its own borders, but on the part of its nationals the world over.

If such things can happen in the free democracies, what of life in Italy itself ? In such an atmosphere of repression and terror there can still be happiness for those with no opinions and no desire to think for themselves. To all others modern Italy is a tragedy—none the less bitter because of the kindness and hospitality of its people.

" We have not ceased to feel a sense of oppression, of suffocation," wrote an American visitor, " and when once we cross the line into Switzerland we shall feel like a wild bird which has been let out of a cage, because we are continually confronted with the bitter complaints and the evident unhappiness of these working people.

“ They cannot mention the name of Mussolini in a public place, because they fear that the mention will be taken as implying criticism. The keeper of the little *trattoria*, though he may be a keen anti-Fascist, does not dare to refuse a place on the wall of his shop to a flattering likeness of the *Duce*. You would think, from the presence of these pictures everywhere, that the whole country was in a state of fulsome worship of the man. But the people among themselves, never mention his name above a whisper.”

CHAPTER XV

THE SAVONA TRIAL—A PAGE FROM HISTORY

“ It will sometimes happen, I know not how in the course of human affairs, that a man shall be made liable to legal animadversions, where he has nothing to answer for, either to God or his country ; and condemned for what he will never be charged with at the Day of Judgment.”

JONATHAN SWIFT.

ON September 9, 1925, there opened at the small industrial seaport of Savona, in Italy, one of the most important political trials staged by *Fascismo* during the Mussolini régime—the trial of seven men, including Professor Carlo Rosselli and Ferruccio Parri, charged with the crime of assisting the aged Socialist leader, Filippo Turati, to escape from Italy in a motor-boat after a passport had been refused him.

They had successfully eluded the eyes of Fascism, and landed the veteran Socialist safely in France. Then, refusing to listen to suggestions that to return to Italy meant heavy punishment, they had gone back. And that morning, at Savona, the moment of reckoning for their sins against Fascism had come.

The court-house where the trial was to be held was small and ill-furnished. Once a chapel, walls and dome were covered with faded frescoes of the worst eighteenth-century period. Three judges sat behind a long table, covered like a coffin with fringed cloth ; their business was not only to sum up and to pass judgment, but to cross-examine. To their right was the Public Prosecutor ; to their left, in seats on other occasions occupied by a jury, the counsel for the defence, seventeen of them, including some of the most prominent lawyers of Italy. The seven prisoners were in a cage opposite, guarded by *carabineers* with fixed bayonets.

The first day of the trial was given up to the cross-examination of the accused. Filippo Turati, Alessandro Pertini and Italo Oxilia, all of whom have found safety in France after unauthorised departure from the Fascist State, were declared enemies of their country. Then the first of the prisoners who were present was called upon—Ferruccio Parri. Tall, slight, pale, with thick hair framing an intellectual face, Parri was once one of the chief journalists of the great *Corriere della Sera*, three times decorated for valour in the war, and promoted from subaltern to major.

He opened his testimony with a rapid account of the escape, exonerating all those accused save himself and Professor Rosselli. He explained how Turati—old, sick, weary—had yielded only to their persuasion ; how Albini, an elderly man and Turati's friend, had done no more than to offer him the quiet of his country-house near Lake Como, and knew nothing of any projected flight ; the vendor of the motor-boat in which the flight was carried out, and the mechanic who accompanied them, were both ignorant of its destination. In

'Milan, he continued, Turati's life was in danger ; for over a month after the attempted assassination of Signor Mussolini at Bologna the whole city was a prey to organised, systematic violence directed by the secretary of the *Fascio* ; the houses, lawyers' chambers and shops sacked numbered hundreds. (Here the judges interrupted with evident uneasiness and talk of " political propaganda," but the senior counsel for the defence, Signor Erizzo, venerable by his white beard and his reputation as one of the greatest barristers of Italy, claimed that the evidence was clearly admissible.)

" Were I in England," continued Parri, " in a country with a progressive civilisation, I could appeal against the legality of the law itself. As it is, I declare I do not recognise the legality of such a law, and broke it with open eyes."

A murmur of sympathy came from the audience, a ringing " Bravo " from an old father proud of his son, brought the ushers to their feet. The lunch recess arrived, and the prisoners were led back to prison, handcuffed two by two, with long chains of which the ends were held by the *carabineers* who walked on either side.

At two o'clock the session was resumed, and Professor Carlo Rosselli was called to make his statement in defence of his action.

Twenty-eight years of age, clean-shaven, with an eager, merry face (he had spent the morning exchanging smiles with his young English wife), he declared in a firm clear voice that he confirmed all his previous statements. He accepted full responsibility for Turati's escape, not in any hope of clemency but because he knew his action to have been both highly moral and highly legal.

Turati, he said, was seventy, a man with an honourable past, suffering from heart disease ; what was his life in Italy ? His correspondence was censored, frequently published in the newspapers before it reached him ; if he telephoned, an unknown voice would interrupt, often with threats ; wherever he went, in his carriage, in train or tram, he was followed by a police official and police officers were posted, day and night, upon his stairs.

After the Bologna attempt upon the life of the Prime Minister, Turati's life had been in peril ; the police themselves had declared that they could not answer for his safety and had forced him to leave his house and take refuge with his friend, Doctor Pini. At the same time, the deputy, Signor Treves, whose offices had been sacked, had taken refuge in his (Rosselli's) house. The following day a police agent, Buccarelli, had gone to Rosselli's house, and declared to Signor Treves : " I have orders to transfer you to a place of safety, for the situation is extremely serious ; the *Fascisti* are singing in the streets that they will carry your head and that of Turati to the *piazza* in front of the cathedral." A few days later the Fascist deputy Marinelli declared that isolated acts of reprisals must cease because " official reprisals had already begun."

Rosselli was interrupted incessantly by the Bench. Aided by the



Photo

Keystone

SIGNOR FILIPPO TURATI, ITALIAN SOCIALIST LEADER

Who escaped to France, with the assistance of Professor Carlo Rosselli, after a passport had been refused him by the Italian authorities.

venerable barrister, he bore down the judges by sheer force of personality. There could be little cross-examination: he held them at the sword's point. It seemed that it was not he who was accused, but that the whole Fascist régime was placed on trial in that little courtroom.

The effect of his fearless outspokenness in a land where fear and whisperings had become the rule, was amazing. It was as if a breath of the fresh air of liberty had blown over Savona.

"We have not wounded, we have not killed any of those who threatened Turati," declared Rosselli, "we have only saved him from grave danger." And he went on to remind the judges that by article 49 of the penal code, any action committed in lawful self-defence, or in the defence of another, is not to be considered a crime. How real the danger was, he added, was proved by his own experiences: he himself had been bludgeoned in Genoa; his mother's house in Florence had been sacked from cellar to roof. "Fifty years ago my great-aunt received into her house the dying Mazzini; could I do otherwise fifty years after than lend assistance to Filippo Turati when in sore need?"

He sat down to the whispered comment: "They are both heroes."

The next to address the Court was Captain Da Bove, who admitted having purchased the motor-boat. Signor Albini and Amedlio the mechanic protested their innocence, while Spirito, who had sold the boat, declared that he was a Fascist.

The whole of the following day was devoted to the hearing of witnesses. One after another, they strode up stiffly, giving the Fascist salute, and testifying in favour of the Fascist Spirito. On the other hand, the Court disallowed the evidence of three of the four chief witnesses summoned by Parri and Rosselli for the defence, namely, Signora Treves, Signor Gonzales, ex-deputy of the Italian Chamber, and Signor Caldara, ex-Mayor of Milan, who were to prove that Turati's life was in danger if he continued to live in Milan. The fourth main witness for the defence, the only one the Court granted permission to be heard, was the police agent Buccarelli, and he "could not be found."

Other police officials from Milan made the extraordinary statements that they knew nothing whatever of any acts of violence or raids that happened off their particular beats. The Inspector General Consolo—whose own brother was murdered in his bed by a Fascist squad in Florence on October 3, 1925—questioned, concerning the disturbed situation in Milan previous to Turati's flight, refused to answer, declaring that he had made a report on the matter to the Home Office at the time, the contents of which were secret.

The most important evidence was that of Doctor Gilardoni, Turati's doctor, who, summoned by the prosecution, declared that the ex-deputy's condition was so serious that the least emotion might have proved fatal. He suffered from acute heart trouble, was in a

state of prostration, and rest and quiet were imperative—rest of a sort that the Socialist leader could only get outside Italy. Before putting in his demand for a passport, Turati had assured this witness that he had no idea of carrying on any political activities abroad, and for that reason was asking for a passport, not for France, but for either Germany or Holland. This demand, though accompanied by a recommendation from the Prefect of Milan, was refused by the Italian Home Office.

Doctor Gilardoni's evidence, fully confirmed by that of Doctor Pini, changed the whole case. While, for assisting the escape of persons leaving Italy for political reasons, the minimum penalty is three years, it becomes six months if the motive is any other. There was small hope, however, that this would be taken into account, given the suppression of essential witnesses and the evident nervousness of the judges (who, under the existing laws, could be deprived of their seats on the Bench if they showed themselves "adverse to the policy of the Government").

Nor had the judges power, in any case, to secure the release of the prisoners. That much was clear from the beginning of the trial. For all the accused immediately upon arrest had been sentenced, unheard, by the special Police Commission to five years' deportation to the islands of detention, whither they would be transferred immediately they had served whatever sentence of imprisonment the Court might pass upon them.

When the Court next reassembled on September 12, the police agent Buccarelli again failed to appear, and it was stated that he could not be found owing to his transfer from Milan to some other city, but following protests made by the counsel for the defence, he was traced and summoned by telegraph to attend the court. The next move in the hunt for this elusive witness was the arrival of a medical certificate stating he was seriously ill with gastric enteritis. "An intelligent illness," commented Rosselli. "Two days ago he was in Turin." This piece of knowledge was evidently turned to good use, for half an hour later the missing witness telephoned from Genoa that he was arriving at Savona by the next train.

The appearance of Police-Inspector Buccarelli upon his entry into the court-room produced an unfavourable impression on all present. Having saluted in Fascist style, he sprawled on the witness seat, answering with nonchalant insolence, contradicting himself frequently, and once referring to the prisoners with such vulgarity that the Bench called him to order. By the end of his evidence, however, he had been made to confirm what he had begun by denying—namely, that he had told Professor Rosselli that neither the life of Signor Treves, nor of Signor Turati, was safe in Milan.

This testimony completed the evidence of witnesses, and that afternoon the Public Prosecutor addressed the Court. He scouted the idea that Turati was in any danger in Italy, questioned the gravity

of his illness and maintained the charge of expatriation from political motives. He demanded, accordingly, a sentence of five years' imprisonment and 20,000 *lira* fine upon Turati, Pertini and Oxilia, who were absent in France, upon Rosselli, Parri and Da Bove, who had organised the escape, and upon Spirito, who had sold the motor-boat ; for Ameglio the mechanic and Giacomo Oxilia he asked for a sentence of four years' imprisonment and 20,000 *lira* fine, while the charge against Albini he withdrew for lack of evidence. He sat down amid a hush of horrified silence.

After a short interval the first of the counsel for the defence made an impassioned plea for Ameglio, pointing out that the Public Safety Act of November, 1926, which had created the Special Tribunal, and under which the prisoners were being tried, conflicted with the Penal Code, claiming that the escape of Turati was an exercise of the right of lawful self-defence and asking at least for a reduction of the charge to one of leaving the country illegally for non-political motives.

Signor Albini's counsel next addressed the Court, showing how, in giving hospitality to Turati (before his flight), his client was carrying out the first duty of friendship to one who had been thirty years his friend, and pointing out that, although the Public Prosecutor had withdrawn the charge against this prisoner, the sentence passed without trial immediately upon Signor Albini's arrest of three years' enforced residence on the penal island of Lipari, remained. Finally, Albini's counsel begged the judges to do their utmost to repeal this sentence.

Next, Turati's counsel, Signor Gallina, began his defence of the absent deputy. An old man, speaking in a slow deep voice, with few gestures, he brought new proof that Turati's escape had been prompted by no political consideration. Turati was seventy, he repeated, suffering from acute heart disease, as two doctors had attested ; the police themselves had admitted to what extremes their surveillance had been carried, until he had been forced from house to house by the disturbance his presence brought to his hosts.

This speech, the quiet tone in which it was delivered, and the conviction of the speaker, seemed to make a profound impression, that deepened when he concluded : " There is one counsel I should like to give you, O judges, a counsel of few words—let your sentence " —and his voice grew soft—" let your sentence be one of pacification."

There were murmurs of applause as he ended. The judges bowed their heads, assenting, but the laws of the Fascist State were a chain upon them.

The following day (September 13) the whole session was occupied with hearing the speeches for the defence ; all the defending counsel based their pleas upon the fact that Turati's escape was not from political motives, and in the course of their speeches the figures of the accused were brought into stronger light.

A young Florentine lawyer opened the defence of Carlo Rosselli, speaking with passionate clarity of this young man who was, at

twenty-seven years of age, a university professor, who had used his wealth for the service of his fellows, who had distinguished himself in the war as lieutenant of the Alpini, who, like his comrade Parri, was honoured by all (a fact which had been admitted by the Public Prosecutor himself). Counsel spoke of Rosselli's family, of the other Carlo Rosselli who had taken into his house the dying Mazzini, of his mother's family connected with such heroes of the *Risorgimento* as Daniele Manin, of his young wife and of the little son born since his arrest and whom he had seen but once. "She is English," said the counsel, in a voice that shook, for he was Rosselli's friend. "She comes from a country where such customs as these are not understood, and she is here listening with such anguish in her eyes!"

Other barristers defended the secondary accused—Signor Rollo, of Savona, spoke of the lawyer Pertini who had fled with Turati, telling how early one morning he had knocked at his door hatless, collarless, in the pouring rain, his arm hanging helplessly from a blow struck by Fascist aggressors. "My landlady," Pertini had declared to him, "dared not send for the doctor. No one dares to help me." Later, another counsel spoke of how life had been made impossible for him in Savona, how he had fled to Milan and there been unable to work, how before he had left that city Pertini had declared he would seek work in France as a waiter in a hotel to avert starvation, and how a photograph had shown the lawyer working for his living as a chauffeur.

But the speech of the day was made by Signor Luzzati, a little obscure lawyer of Savona, with bright eyes and a bulging forehead, who tiptoed about with a deprecatory air.

He began timidly, speaking of Turati, mentioning how the police had claimed a key to allow them entry at any time into his house, emphasising the effect upon an old man suffering from heart trouble of police visits at midnight telling him they could not guarantee his life, pointing out that immediately he reached France he had to undergo a prolonged rest cure. He traced Turati's political career, quoted his famous speech after the disaster of Caporetto, when he had called upon all Socialists to rally to the Government now that the enemy was upon Italian soil; quoting also another speech when for a second time Turati had rendered good service to Italy by denouncing the Bolshevik elements in Italian Socialism. He read out Turati's political programme of June, 1918—a programme of admirable moderation.

All this the little Savona lawyer said unchecked. But then he turned to speak of the Public Safety Act of November, 1926. "This Act is a juridical monstrosity," he declared audaciously. The presiding judge protested. The little barrister returned to the attack, showing how the article allotting the same penalty to the principal culprit and to those who assist him is in direct contradiction with the Penal Code of Italy. Ignoring the judge's protests, he continued

by showing how severe was a penalty of from three to six years' imprisonment and 20,000 *lira* fine for simple flight from Italy for political motives, as compared with the far lighter sentences for much graver crimes established by penal law. He denounced fearlessly the provision ordering the frontier guards to shoot anyone attempting to cross the frontier by other than the normal roads. "Such a law, I say, is a monstrosity," he exclaimed. At this point the judge pulled him up finally.

He continued on a calmer note to speak of Ferruccio Parri, reading out a list of his decorations—three Italian silver medals for valour and the French *Croix de Guerre*—with the account of the heroic actions by which he earned them.

The little lawyer's voice broke a strange, tense silence as he went on to speak of Parri's political ideals, of his one aim "to do good to Italy"; of the ideal of liberty and all that the sacrifice and example of such men as Parri and Rosselli would mean to the young men of to-morrow. No one interrupted him. The very judges seemed spell-bound; the audience, workmen mostly, were listening with strained attention and bright eyes near to tears.

The soft voice of the little man who was challenging the whole might and right of Fascism went steadily on.

"Savona has had the sorrowful privilege of holding illustrious prisoners in the past—Pius VII, who was the forerunner of Pius IX; Mazzini, who was the forerunner of the new Italy; and now these two, Rosselli and Parri—may they not be the forerunners of a new era of justice and liberty?" With a few words of humble admiration for Parri, and begging him to hold his defender in remembrance, the little lawyer finished one of the most dramatic speeches heard in Italy since the March on Rome.

As he sat down, the accumulated emotion overflowed in shouts of "Bravo" and—a rarity in courts held in Italy to-day—applause. The little lawyer was surrounded by handshakes, embraces, congratulations, as he timidly gathered up his papers, and, having shaken Parri by the hand, tiptoed quietly away.

The prisoners were once more chained together and led out to the prison-van, through a crowd which had grown from day to day, amid friendly looks, a timid waving of hands, and an oppressive silence.

September 14 was the last day of the trial. The whole Court is feeling the strain when Signor Oppenheim, a famous Fascist lawyer of Genoa, rises to protest the innocence of his client, Spirito. The air is charged with sympathy for the men in the dock. Fascist though the lawyer is, some remember that there had been tears in his eyes when, the previous day, he had listened to little Signor Luzzati speaking of Parri—his heroic career as a soldier, the nobility of character that had won for that prisoner the admiration of all. Now Oppenheim pays his tribute to Parri and Rosselli as valiant adversaries, and declares proudly: "This trial should never have been."

• He is followed by Signor Pelligrini, who uses up the rest of the morning showing the contradiction between the new Act of 1926 and the Penal Code, using historical comparisons, cogent reasonings and brilliant sallies to drive home his points, as when he compares the anti-Fascist to a missionary who as he is roasted is told by his companion: "Patience, brother, it is only a custom of the country," or to a man buried beneath an earthquake expected to be comforted by the knowledge that "it is only the earth settling down." His aim is to fill up time before lunch so that the final defence shall continue uninterrupted.

A reply by the Public Prosecutor which is an impassioned defence of the Public Safety Act, with its savage penalties for those who seek their vanished liberties in political flight, and Signor Erizzo rises to make the final speech for the defence.

Oldest and wisest of Italian barristers, white-bearded, with little graceful hands and a voice that commands attention, he showed conclusively Turati's danger in Milan—proved by the evidence of the doctors that he was suffering from arterial and heart trouble to such an extent that the slightest emotion might be fatal, proved by the evidence of the police, who admitted the Fascist threats against him and admitted that they followed him night and day wherever he took refuge.

There was a moment when judges, counsel and audience were moved to tears as the lawyer recalled the desperate plight of Pertini, the promising young barrister driven by Fascist aggression from Savona, with a broken arm, and forced to take flight from Italy, not from a political motive but from hunger, and to find work in France, first as a waiter, then as a dock labourer.

"What should Filippo Turati have done since his life was at stake?" he asked. "To convict him would be to foreswear the whole of the juridical patrimony of Italy, for Turati's expatriation was no crime, but a legitimate act of self-defence." Then, having drawn a picture of the old Socialist leader's long and honoured career, the speaker once more brought tears to the eyes of all by a final appeal for the young men who by organising Turati's escape had saved his life.

"They have destroyed their careers," he said. "Their children are left without them, their wives are prematurely widowed, they have given up everything save their honour for the sake of what they believe is right. I am neither Fascist nor anti-Fascist, but when I see youth capable of such a miracle, there rises to my lips the first line of the Fascist hymn—'Giovinezza. Youth, youth, spring-time of beauty.'"

He sat down, overcome with emotion. Some of the younger lawyers crowded about him, embracing him. The three judges withdrew to deliberate upon their verdict.

It was then six o'clock. An hour passed; and then another; lamps



THE FIVE PRISONERS LEAVING THE SAVONA COURT HOUSE IN CHAINS AFTER BEING SENTENCED TO TEN MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT

And in addition, deportation to the islands for five years, for assisting Filippo Turati to flee from Italy.
Ferruccio Parri is second from the left and next him is Professor Carlo Rosselli.

were lit, faces showed pale and weary. The countenances of the prisoners, for all their brave smiles, were white and drawn; the two anxious young wives sat silent, dreading what the next few minutes would bring, thinking of weary years before them.

All there forbade them hope. "The judges will do their best, but they dare not drop the political charge," it was said.

"No judge could do it," said another barrister, "unless he was just about to resign. They would have to be heroes."

"They cannot convict with a clear conscience on that evidence?"

"They cannot do otherwise. They will not give five years, but three years they must give according to the law."

"What can one hope?" One asked the question again and again, and the answer was always "Nothing" or "Very little."

So the group of barristers talked together as the third hour passed. Nine o'clock. The audience had been standing in that court-room since two. Men and women, young and old, waiting supperless, and those who came in said that in the court-yard, in the street, a great crowd waited also for the last act of the drama. The prisoners, who had been talking vivaciously with their friends, now sat exhausted between the compassionate *carabineers*. And so a fourth hour passed.

Then the judges returned, and the presiding judge read out the sentences which they had decided upon, quickly, through set teeth.

Filippo Turati, Sandro Pertini, Ferruccio Parri, Carlo Rosselli, Lorenzo Da Bove—ten months' imprisonment!

There was a moment's stupefaction, then the truth dawned upon the packed court. The judges had risked all, listening to no voice but the voice of justice and humanity and their own conscience. They had rejected the Public Prosecutor's charge of political motives, and in so doing, incredible as it may seem to English minds, they had risked their whole careers. But they had gloriously upheld the great traditions of the Tuscan magistracy. They had been true to all that is greatest in Italian history.

There was a burst of clapping, shouts of "*Viva, viva.*" The prisoners, bewildered, half-dreaming, were shaken by the hand again and again. Everyone was shaking hands with everyone else. "Are you happy?" asked the guards. "Are you happy?" asked everyone. The Fascist lawyer burst through like a tornado, eyes shining. "By my faith as a Fascist, I rejoice," he cried, and disappeared.

Ten months instead of five years. Ten months, of which eight had already expired. Nevertheless the sentence of "forced residence" on the islands of Ustica and Lipari—Italy's Siberia—inflicted by the Police Commission, remained to be served. And to the islands the prisoners were sent immediately upon their "release" two months later. From there Carlo Rosselli, together with Francesco Nitti and Emilio Lussu, was to successfully escape in 1929—an escape for which

his English wife and his brother Nello were promptly arrested as "hostages."

But these subsequent events are dealt with in an earlier chapter. The Savona trial reflected credit upon everyone concerned, except the Fascist authorities who ordered it, and the Government which hounds its opponents to their deaths, and refuses them the right to seek peace and rest in a more friendly land.

CHAPTER XVI

PRISONERS OF FASCISM

"If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

JOHN STUART MILL.

PRISON conditions in Italy have always lagged behind those in other Western nations. Overcrowded and verminous cells, poor food, brutal treatment and an indifference to health or suffering—these things existed before the Fascists assumed power. In only two respects have those conditions become worse under the present régime. All prisons in Italy have been terribly overcrowded during the past seven years; thousands of political prisoners have been sent to prisons which have always been insufficient to accommodate comfortably their habitual "customers." And those thousands of "politicals" have suffered more than do the hardened criminals from the harsh discipline and terrible conditions which are the common lot of all those incarcerated in Fascist jails. As one who has passed through nine prisons on the mainland of Italy said to me recently: "Really, no progress has been made since the time of the Bourbons, except that the chains which bound the prisoners' feet have gone. The chains for the wrists and the lines of prisoners chained to each other are still there."

The ardent prison reformer may see a certain irony in the fact that many of those who before 1922 possessed the power to urge some amelioration in the prisoners' lot, have since had personal experience of the Italian prison system at its worst. Unfortunately, by no means all those who have, as political prisoners of Fascism, suffered imprisonment during the last seven years, share that responsibility. For if the Fascists have not aggravated conditions which were already atrocious, especially in Southern Italy, they have sentenced large numbers both of the intelligentsia and humble working men to the full severity of the worst prisons in Europe.

Under Fascism no distinction is made between criminals and those convicted, or even suspected, of anti-Fascist opinions. Whether arrested under administrative order and awaiting deportation to "*confino di politizia*" (exile to one of the islands which form Italy's "Siberia"), sentenced to imprisonment by the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State, awaiting trial (often for months), or convicted by an ordinary assize court for a criminal offence, all endure the same conditions. Where there is any distinction, the extra degree of severity is reserved for political prisoners, whose only crime is a reluctance to bless the Fascist régime.

These political prisoners are confined to filthy, verminous and overcrowded cells, in conditions which impose upon them the most revolting promiscuity. Voluminous evidence exists to prove that

contention, but one or two cases will suffice to reveal what awaits the political "offender" on the first stage of his confinement.

An intellectual arrested in Florence in 1928—on a charge which was at first withheld and later, when divulged, proved quite easily to have been false—was taken to the Le Murate Prison. There he was thrown into a cell in which two people were already complaining of the lack of room and air (it was summer). The inmates complained bitterly against the intellectual entering as a third guest, and the guards found some difficulty in pushing a third camp-bed into the cell. The two original occupants were a professional pickpocket and an anarchist imprisoned for persistent drunkenness. In this cell the political prisoner remained for six weeks, during which time he only came into touch (through the forty-five minutes which was the daily ration for exercise in the courtyard) with common offenders.

Another political prisoner, a university professor who was eventually to be exiled to one of the penal islands, was imprisoned for some weeks at the l'Ucciardone Prison at Palermo. The first cell in which he was placed was a large one, built to accommodate three or four inmates. It was then occupied by thirty, all criminals, all of whom were suffering badly from the heat and overcrowding. No beds or chairs were provided, and the unfortunate inmates had to sit round the walls on the bare floor. One blanket apiece was provided at night. From this cell the Professor was transferred to a smaller one in which three brothers of a peasant family had been confined for two years, charged with being members of the *Mafia* (the Sicilian secret society which was broken up by the Italian Government with some thousands of arrests). When the Professor was forced to make their acquaintance, they had not seen any lawyer, any judge or any member of their family since their arrest.

On the night before he set out on the journey to the isles of deportation, the "political" was once more transferred—to a large cell called "*Deposito*." In this cell he remained alone for more than twelve hours, without food, water or covering. The floor was so dirty that he did not care to sit down and perforce spent the night walking round in circles. The food issued at this prison (if a prisoner has not the money to buy his meals at the canteen) was so unpalatable that, more than once, poor prisoners who were his companions preferred to remain hungry rather than eat it.

In the prison of Frosinone at Rome, in 1929, a political prisoner arrested without any definite charge being made against him was placed in a cell which already housed fourteen people. As the last arrival, the "political" was given the worst position, his camp-bed being a few feet away from the common lavatory. This cell had no external window, the sole light coming in from a fanlight adjoining the corridor. His neighbour in the cell was a man who a few days before had been sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for violence against a child.

Something of the mental stress which follows the confinement of intellectuals in these conditions is revealed in a letter which Ernesto Rossi, one of the Italian Liberals arrested in December, 1930, for an offence against the State, and who, after waiting trial for six months, was on May 31, 1931, sentenced by the Special Tribunal to twenty years' imprisonment and deprivation for ever of the right to hold any public office,¹ wrote to his mother shortly after his arrest :

" The time I spend now in writing to you is like a ray of light in the darkness of my day of rigorous solitary confinement. After the active life I have always led, this complete inactivity is stupefying. But I struggle against it and mean to keep up the struggle. I promise you, mother dear, since I know that you are bearing this new misfortune with your usual strength of soul. Don't worry about my food. It suits me very well. Though all I have to eat with is a wooden spoon, I have a decent appetite. I sleep, too, better than you might think. Now I have grown accustomed to the light being kept on all night, I sleep well with a towel across my eyes, and sometimes do not even wake when they make the night round of inspection. I go to bed an hour after nightfall and get up at the first glimmer of dawn. The morning passes relatively quickly with getting washed and dressed, making my bed, sweeping out my cell with a lavatory brush, going for my turn of exercise—an hour's walking round the little triangle or corridor in the courtyard, which I go round 180 times each morning. The afternoons, however, are never-ending. My dinner is over by midday. From my window all I can see is a patch of sky, because in addition to bars and a grating, there are crossbars over the upper part.

" I pace up and down my cell, smoke, sit down to read, read a bit. If I had the possibility of writing the time would not hang on my hands. I have so much the habit of writing that I cannot follow up a train of thought unless I can set it down on paper. But permission to write is extremely hard to get, and I can only hope that soon some books will arrive."

On August 31, 1928, the *Comite de Defense des Victimes du Fascisme* published details of the case of Umberto Terracini, a leader of the Communist Party in Italy, who was in grave danger of dying in the Italian prison of Santo Stefano²—a prison the horrors of which were exposed by Gladstone at a time when Settembrini, Spaventa and others were its unfortunate guests. This statement was followed by further details which reveal the terrible conditions imposed upon many of the political prisoners of Fascism :

" The condition of Umberto Terracini is more or less that of all political prisoners in Italy to-day. The ferocious sentences (of ten, fifteen and even twenty-five years) passed by the Fascist Tribunal

¹ See page 324.

² *Manchester Guardian*, August 31, 1928.

upon those accused of political crime always imply solitary confinement for one-third of the time of imprisonment. During this time the prisoner lives completely shut off from human intercourse; he must not speak, he never leaves his small cell, even the usual daily forty minutes in the open air being denied him, and he is allowed no other food than that provided in the prison. Six months of this life result only too often in the prisoner falling a victim of tuberculosis or mental derangement. At one time the Fascists had recourse to bludgeoning and shooting their adversaries in the streets or in their houses. This is no longer necessary. The Special Fascist Tribunal condemns them to '*segregazione cellulare*' and nothing more is heard of them."¹

That this statement was (with the exception of one point noted below) substantially correct, was shown by further details supplied by Signora Alma Terracini, wife of the condemned man:

"My husband is in the convict prison of Santo Stefano, where he is undergoing three years' solitary confinement, as the first stage of his sentence of twenty-two years nine months' imprisonment passed on him by the Fascist Special Tribunal, for political reasons. Santo Stefano is on a rocky island six hours from Naples, and was, at the time of the Bourbons, a State prison. Afterwards the Italian Government used it for prisoners serving life sentences, and for those who were too violent to be kept in the ordinary prisons. The Fascist Government has restored it to its original Bourbonic function. Solitary confinement means absolute solitude in a cell measuring ten feet by six and a half feet, lit by a well light, and provided by no means of illumination when daylight fails; furnished with a camp-bed, which is shut up during the day to prevent the prisoner lying on it, and a stool. My husband's food is as follows. He receives from the prison authorities a ration of soup and a ration of bread per day. On Sundays six ounces of boiled meat. In addition he may spend four *lira* (10½d.) a day: but since this sum must satisfy all his needs he cannot devote more than 3 *lira* (8d.) daily to food. With this about ¼-lb. of *salame* (sausage) and a handful of olives may be had. During the month of October he was allowed to buy three dozen eggs, and a few days ago, for the first time, some vegetables—a couple of pounds of onions. Upon this diet . . . my husband, who is thirty-three years old—that is, in the prime of life—has gone down in weight to seven stone."²

¹ Letter signed "M.E." published in *Manchester Guardian*, September 8, 1928. The writer was incorrect in stating that one-third of a sentence is passed in solitary confinement. The period so served is one-sixth. Otherwise her statements stand uncontradicted.

² *Manchester Guardian*, November 21, 1928. It is only fair to add that the Italian authorities reported that Terracini had been offered his liberty "under certain conditions." If liberty was, in fact, offered to a man sentenced by a Fascist Court to twenty-three years' imprisonment, surely this proves that his only crime was to hold opinions not approved by the authorities. And the fact that Terracini refused the offer even though suffering from solitary confinement is a tribute to his character.

The majority of the political prisoners in Italy, however, are incarcerated in these prisons only as a preliminary to deportation to the penal islands, either by sentence of the Special Tribunal or by administrative order, or both. The Fascist punishment of internment (*confino di polizia*) was formerly known in Italy as "enforced residence," and in pre-Fascist days reserved as a punishment for vagrants, habitual criminals, white slave traffickers and drunkards, who might be ordered, for the good of society, to reside in special areas under police supervision.

Following Zamboni's attempt upon the life of Mussolini, the Fascist State extended this list of persons who might be sentenced to internment to all political opponents of the régime, whether active or only suspected :

"The police shall be empowered to intern all those who have committed, or manifested the deliberate intention of committing acts subversive of the social, economic or national order, or capable of diminishing the security of the State, or opposing or hindering the action of the State authorities in a way capable of prejudicing national interests according to the internal or international situation of the moment."¹

Under this new law, men of all parties and none have been banished to Lipari, Ponza, Lampedusa, Ustica and elsewhere ; the internees include Socialists, Communists, Republicans, Christian Democrats, Liberals, Anarchists, Freemasons.

Whereas formerly only the incorrigible enemy of society was thus exiled, and then only after trial by regular judges, under Fascism those sentenced to *confino* rarely see a judge or even know the charge against them. Their name appears on a list of opponents of the régime compiled by the police. One day the suspect is arrested, thrown into prison, and after a period of four or six weeks, banished to the islands without any opportunity of confronting his accusers or refuting the evidence against him. Often they know neither the charges against them, nor the sentence imposed by the authorities until they have left Italy behind them.

In one respect this system of internment by administrative order is unique. It may be applied even to those who have been tried and acquitted by the regular Courts.² And it may be imposed without any fresh trial upon those who have suffered a term of imprisonment.³

¹ Article 84 of the law of November 6, 1926.

² Ettore Albini, Francesco Spirito and Giacomo Oxilia were acquitted by the Court at Savona of charges connected with the escape of Signor Filippo Turati from Italy (as recorded in another chapter). Upon release from prison, they were immediately re-arrested and, despite acquittal, sentenced by administrative order to exile ; the first two were shipped to Lipari and Oxilia to Ustica.

³ Dr. Carlo Rosselli and Dr. Ferruccio Parri, having served the sentence of ten months' imprisonment for assisting Turati to escape, were re-arrested upon release and, without any new trial, banished to Lipari and Ustica respectively, thus serving two sentences for one "crime"—the first imposed by a Court, the second by the Fascist authorities.

Dr. Nello Rosselli, author of a famous book on *Mazzini and Bakunin*, was one of the many prominent Italian intellectuals who has endured the experience of being arrested and exiled without knowing the charges against him.

At the very moment when intellectual Italy was discussing his book, which had brought him a prize from the Society for the History of the *Risorgimento*, he was arrested and sent without any examination to Ustica. Only later did his mother learn the details of the charges against him. These charges were two : that he had written a clandestine pamphlet, and sent money to anti-Fascist refugees in France. The so-called pamphlet was, in fact, a preface written by Senator Fortunato to a collection of his own speeches, while the money drawn from the bank had been used to provide a house for his wife upon their marriage. The most cursory enquiry would have revealed to the police the utter absurdity of these charges, but no enquiry was made, and so Dr. Rosselli spent eight months in Ustica before he regained freedom.

Sentences of exile are usually for three or five years, which may be extended, again by simple administrative order and without trial, when that period has ended. Thus an unfortunate suspect may be kept on Lipari without trial and without knowing the charges against him, for the term of his natural life.

Those who possess the means, and secure police permission, may travel to the selected island of deportation in an ordinary railway carriage, by paying their own fare and the fare of two guards (in a typical journey this costs about £15). Those unable to afford this luxury travel in a *vagone cellulare*, a prison-cell on wheels. These prison-wagons are made up of small cells, each just large enough to accommodate a man in a sitting position, but without enough room for stretching the limbs during the long journey. During the whole of the time spent in the train, which may be days or weeks—for the trains are slow—the prisoner is handcuffed to a chain which passes through holes from one end of the carriage to the other, attaching all prisoners together.

No food or water is supplied to prisoners while in transit. The trains travel only by day, stopping each night at some station where there is a prison, to which the prisoners are transferred. There they are placed in a *cella di transito* reserved for those *en route* for further destinations. These cells are often without light or air, and vermin are not unknown.

A prisoner who has endured the discomforts of this mode of travel writes :

“ When we came out of the cell, after twenty to twenty-four hours of enforced immobility, foodless, in almost total darkness and airlessness, our hands were swollen from the tightness of the handcuffs and we could scarcely recognise one another.”

One of the political internees, who had served his term in the island of Pantelleria, thus described his journey to the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (January 2, 1928) :

" His journey from Verona to Pantelleria lasted five weeks. In the course of the journey, which was performed in company with common criminals, he spent four days in prison at Verona, three days in Milan, two days at Modena, three days in Rome, two days in Naples, four days at Palermo, and twelve days at Trapani. In some of these prisons he was given special treatment and allowed to get food from outside. In others he was subject to ordinary criminal treatment. The journey concluded with twenty-four hours in chains in the hold of a tramp steamer from Trapani to Pantelleria.¹ What had he done to earn this treatment? He never knew. No formal accusation was ever brought against him. He was haled to prison one fine morning and after two days informed of his condemnation. He was then told that he could lodge an appeal through a lawyer, but before the lawyer came he was removed to another town."

The end of the journey comes upon arrival at one of the islands of detention, which are mostly situated in the Adriatic between Sicily and Africa. Opinions differ regarding the attractions of these various spots which collectively form Italy's "Siberia."

Thus Luigi Villari, a writer favourable to the Fascist Government, has stated that the islands of deportation selected for the residence of political prisoners are "generally considered to be among the most beautiful spots in Italy."² On the other hand, an impartial American observer who has visited Lipari has stated: "Life on the island offers little in the way of variety or diversion. Lipari is almost unbelievably primitive. There are no motors, no carts, no roads, there is only one bath tub. . . . That life on Lipari is not the happiest may be judged from the fact that a good many prisoners knowing well the difficulties of escape and the inevitable consequences of failure, nevertheless have made desperate attempts to get away."³ Signor Nitti, who spent two years on Lipari, has recorded his first impressions on landing there from Lampedusa (another of the penal islands) :

" Fierce winds sweep its volcanic surface day and night during many months of the year, in winter, autumn and the greater part of spring. The crumbling old houses of the town are shaken by

¹ "Who will describe the conditions of the *cellulari* in the Naples-Palermo steamers?" writes another political deportee. "Political and common prisoners, *en route* for Ustica, are thrown, handcuffed, in a space, completely dark, in the lowest part of the ship. The journey lasting only one night, has been unanimously described to me by fellow-deportees as one of the most terrible phases of all their experiences."

² *Italy*, by Luigi Villari (Benn, 1929), pp. 230-231.

³ Frank Schoonmaker in *New York Herald Tribune*, March 23, 1930.

continual blasts, and the wind howls mournfully at night through the narrow streets. On certain days the wind is so strong that the inhabitants cannot go out of doors. It whirls up in blinding clouds of dust, that makes progress almost impossible.

"Nevertheless, Lipari seemed a kind of terrestrial paradise for me for the first few days after our arrival. After the desolate, sun-scorched landscape of Lampedusa, it appeared a land of enchantment, with its rich vegetation, fairly clean streets, shops, cafés and electric light. On the first landing, the vision of green hills, dotted with little white cottages, enclosing the town in a wide semi-circle, delighted our eyes. But all this pleasure soon vanished as the grim realities of existence on Lipari were revealed."¹

Ustica, another of the penal islands, measures only about two miles square, and during the long periods of drought water has to be conveyed by boat from Palermo. So great is the scarcity of water during much of the year that the first thought of the luckless intellectuals who are interned there, upon hearing that one of their number is to be released, is always: "Lucky man, now you will be able to have a bath."

The deportees sent to Ustica who are unable to afford lodgings in one of the houses of the population of 900 fishermen and peasants, are lodged in the "Fortress." Others, finding no other shelter, make their homes in the volcanic grottoes on the island.

Prior to December 1, 1930, each deportee sent to the islands, received ten *lira* (about 2s. 2d.) daily maintenance allowance. On that date the allowance was reduced to five *lira* a day. As very few political internees receive any regular relief from their families, most of them being poor workmen, it is obviously impossible for the majority to live on a sum of 1s. 1d. a day without privation.

At Lipari, three hundred "politicals," upon learning of this reduction in the daily allowance, refused to accept relief at the lower rate. Whereupon they were attacked by the guards, and many of them arrested and taken to Messina, there to await trial and punishment for participating in this "relief strike."

On the day following the reduction in the rate of allowance, most of the messes where the deportees fed were closed, lacking the money to provide food. When meal-time came on Lipari the deportees walked the streets, eating bread and radishes, with the result that eighteen were arrested for eating in public—an infringement of the regulations. As others promptly took their places, and ate their bread in the streets, it became obvious that a strict enforcement of the rule would lead to a widespread disturbance, and those arrested were released.

Of 366 political deportees on Lipari on that date, forty-eight had families with them, including nineteen small children. There were

¹ *Escape*, by Francesco Nitti, pp. 146-147.



THE PENAL ISLAND OF LIPARI—ITALY'S "SIBERIA"

To which many hundreds of Italians have been deported for the "crime" of holding political opinions distasteful to the Fascist regime.

also forty-six deportees on the invalid list. Of this total, thirteen only had found employment on the island, at an average wage of from six to twelve *liras* per day.

Every deportee on the islands receives upon arrival a residence permit (*carta di permanenza*) on which are printed the following rules, "which must be strictly observed."

1. To take regular work, in respect of which this office must be notified.
2. Not to leave the allotted dormitory or dwelling, or to go without permission beyond certain limits.
3. To return to the dormitory in the evening at sunset, or earlier if the office so orders; not to leave it before the hour of opening.
4. Not to keep or carry arms or instruments capable of being used for aggression.
5. Not to frequent brothels, and not to frequent cafés, inns or public-houses and indulge in dissipation.
6. Not to attend public meetings, processions, plays or public entertainments.
7. Not to associate with old offenders, nor in a suspicious manner with other deportees.
8. To be of good conduct, and give no cause for suspicion.
9. To present himself at the office whenever summoned, and every Sunday.
10. Always to carry this card and to present it on request.

The following disciplinary regulations must also be observed: any infringement rendering those concerned liable to severe penalties:

- (a) To appear every day at the Castle to receive the subsistence allowance.
- (b) To avoid gambling, quarrelling, disrespectful expressions about the National Government, swearing, words or acts offending against good manners, disrespectful behaviour towards the Governor and officials of the colony, or towards the police and militia, disobedience of orders, and lack of deference and respect towards the authorities.
- (c) To refrain from bullying fellow prisoners, from practising usury on them or the citizens of the island, and from creating disorders in the town, or in the dormitories.
- (d) Not to damage the walls, notices or anything belonging to the barracks, or the clothes allotted to the prisoner.
- (e) Not to live in concubinage, or to contract liaisons; not to carry on the selling of food or drink without the permission of this office.
- (f) To deposit in this office any sum exceeding 50 *lira*, for which a Post Office Savings Book will be issued.

- (g) To submit to all rules of hygiene which may be made, and to maintain cleanliness of person, clothes and other effects.
- (h) To attend the schools, meetings and lectures, as may be ordered, to behave in them in a serious and correct manner and not to speak unless spoken to.
- (i) Not to make collective complaints, written or verbal; to abstain, except in cases of extreme and urgent necessity, from seeking interviews with the Governor on days and hours other than those already established, *viz* : Tuesday and Saturday from 9 a.m. until 12.

It is almost impossible for these rules to be completely observed. It is impossible, for example, for the majority to find work of any sort; if they could, their lot would be easier, for monotony is the curse of the penal islands. And it is possible for the Fascist militiamen and *carabineers* to construe almost any action as a breach of the regulations. Thus, all deportees live under the perpetual apprehension of arrest. They all know that, in order to be arrested, it is unnecessary that they should commit any real offence; the unsupported evidence of a militiaman, or the denunciation of a spy, are more than sufficient to bring them into conflict with the authorities.

Those who infringe the rules of *confino* reproduced above usually undergo disciplinary punishment, which may be either summary or after a regular trial before a judge.

The spirit in which the regulations are administered is revealed by a case which occurred at Ustica in 1927. A deportee named Giuseppe Massarenti was arrested on a charge of being found outside the "limits" with an out-of-date authorisation (an old man, he had been authorised, on account of his health, to walk outside the usual limits). It transpired that his pass, granted for monthly periods, had expired, and he had omitted to make a request for renewal. For this technical offence the judge sentenced him to forty days' imprisonment.

It is difficult to discover on what grounds the various *Commissioni del confino di polizia* regulate the length of the sentences which they impose. Poor men charged merely with having belonged to an opposition political party (when these were legally existing) have been sentenced to five years' exile in one city, while elsewhere active members of the Communist Party's direction have been sentenced to one year.¹

Among all those sentenced to deportation, there are two groups of exiles whose presence on the island calls for special mention. The first of these are the *molinellesi*, a number of peasants from the Molinelle district, formerly belonging to the Unitarian Socialists, who were

¹ Amedeo Bordiga, a prominent Italian Communist leader, was sentenced at Naples to only three years' deportation; Giuseppe Berti, another leading Communist, also received the same sentence. Contrasted with such decisions, hundreds of citizens suspected of sympathy with this or other opposition parties have been sentenced by other tribunals to five years' enforced residence on one of the isles of deportation.

exiled on account of their refusal to join the Fascist agricultural syndicates (although the Fascist law recognises everyone's right to remain independent from every syndicate). The resistance which these peasants offered for years to all sorts of Fascist persecution (murders, deportations, thrashings, burnings and forced unemployment) has been one of the most dramatic episodes of Italian post-war history.

The second group consists of *gli altoatesini* and *gli slavi*, the members of Italy's minority races exiled for their desperate fight to save their language, their culture and all those rights which were not only granted to them by the peace treaties, but, morally, by modern civilisation and by Italy's own long fight, before the Great War, to save those same rights from Austrian aggression.

In 1927, among the 400 deportees in Ustica, there were :

- 200 Communists, one hundred of whom, perhaps, had actually belonged to that party.
 - 70 Anarchists, most of them individualists and unconnected with the organised anarchist groups.
 - 20 Republicans.
 - 50 Maximalist (left wing) Socialists.
 - 30 right wing Socialists.
 - 15 Liberals and Democrats.
- And a number of deportees politically independent of all parties.

In 1928, in Ponza, the proportion was about the same ; the Liberals and Democrats being rather more numerous.

Among the prominent Italians who have been sentenced to *confino* on the islands are :

- Roberto Bencivenga*, formerly President of the Italian Press Association, an ex-deputy and one-time General in the Italian Army, who was for several months during the war acting secretary to the Commander-in-Chief.
- Giuseppe Meoni*, formerly a high dignitary of the Freemasons and an outstanding member of the Republican Party.
- Ferruccio Parri*, who, as stated elsewhere, served during the war with great distinction and was many times decorated.
- Giuseppe Massarenti*, formerly Mayor of Molinella (Bologna), a well-known moderate Socialist.
- Umberto Cosmo*, nearly 70 years old. A teacher in the public schools of Turin (sentenced to five years' exile for having signed a letter declaring admiration for Benedetto Croce).
- Alfredo Misuri*, formerly a Fascist deputy, whom his own party, enraged by his opposition to the violent policy of the Government, nearly killed in a savage assault.
- Lelio Basso*, a young Milanese lawyer and philosopher.
- Mario Neri*, a judge of the Turin *Tribunale* (court).
- Signor Torrigiani*, the veteran Grand Master of Italian Freemasonry.

In addition to such prominent Italians—the list might be greatly extended without including any name with which those in touch with modern Italy would be unfamiliar—hundreds of private citizens have shared the rigours of exile. It is well known that the *confino politico* is considered by the Fascist police to be the simplest method of getting rid of anyone who, for whatever reason (very often entirely apart from politics), has incurred the displeasure of some Fascist “*gros bonnet*.” When the police send such individuals to the islands, they usually describe them as “communists,”¹ a fact which helps to maintain the myth of a “Red” danger in Italy.

The conditions of life on the islands, and the procedure through which pass those sentenced to exile, may best be illustrated by relating the actual experiences of a young intellectual who had the misfortune to come under suspicion of the Fascist police early in 1927.

He was arrested in March of that year and sent to prison, all officials of the *Questuro* and the prison affecting ignorance of the reason for this deprivation of liberty. On the fourth day of his imprisonment, a police officer entered his cell and read out to him the brief sentence of the *Commissione Provinciale del confino di polizia* (Provincial Commission) committing him to deportation for a period of five years.

The charges for which this sentence had been awarded were briefly as follows :

1. Being known as a violent opponent of the Fascist Government, and a person of subversive and anti-national views.
2. Having financed opposition to the régime.
3. Having been in touch with anti-Fascist refugees abroad.

The police officer informed the prisoner that he had ten days in which to appeal against the sentence to the *Commissione Centrale* if he wished to do so, for which purpose he was supplied with one sheet of paper on which to write his defence. Although finding it difficult to refute such vague charges, he wrote in a few lines a definite and complete denial of them, adding that he was an avowed member of the Liberal Party, and demanding the communication to him of the evidence on which he had been sentenced.

A month had passed without any reply coming from the *Commissione Centrale* when the police ordered the prisoner to proceed to the

¹ A political deportee has described the following dialogue between a newly-arrived *confinato politico* in Ustica, and the Director of the colony :

Director : “ To which party do you belong ? ”

Internee : “ To none.”

Director : “ Then why have you been sent here ? ”

Internee : “ I don't know.”

Director : “ What is your profession ? ”

Internee : “ None.”

Director : “ How, then, do you earn your living ? ”

Internee : “ I have been a thief. . . .”

Director (to his clerk) : “ Put down this man as a Communist.”

islands to serve his sentence. He was sent to Ustica, where he remained for nearly a year, but during that time no reply came to the document he had submitted to the Central Commission. It should be noted that during the whole of the period that this prisoner was in the hands of the Italian authorities, he never saw a judge, a lawyer, or anyone else having anything to do with the magistracy of Italy. And his case, in this respect, is the case of thousands arrested and imprisoned, or exiled, by administrative measure. The charges on which deportees are sent to the islands are usually as vague as those set out above, for this reason—if the police had discovered anything concrete against them, they would not be shipped into exile without trial, but denounced to the Special Tribunal and more heavily punished.

In *Escape*, Francesco Nitti told the story of one Veronica and his brutalities towards the deportees at Lampedusa. Unfortunately, the case of this Fascist officer was not exceptional. Thrashings, abuses, provocations and persecution of every kind are always and everywhere being inflicted upon the political exiles; so universal is the ruthlessness they endure that it is a fair assumption that it happens as a result of orders sent from Rome. It is impossible to believe the only other alternative—that the great mass of Fascist police and militia-men are brutes by nature.

Not infrequently, the terrorist methods of the militia-men reach such proportions that the police and *carabineers* are forced to intervene; hence frequent conflicts between the three forces. Deportees are arrested (and sent to prison) because they do not take off their hats to officers; because they do not make the *saluto Romano*; because they are suspected of laughing at officers of the guard, or staring at them. Yet any militiaman may annoy the deportees without restraint. When General Bencivenga first arrived at Ustica (1927) militiamen used to make fun of him, when dining in the only restaurant on the island, by wearing mock monocles in imitation of the General, who is compelled to wear a monocle by myopia.

The deportees are generally allowed to invite their families to join them in their place of exile (in many cases, however, this permission has been refused, either on the ground that the families concerned were "subversive," or in order to bring pressure to bear upon the deportee concerned to sign a plea for magnanimity and pardon, or to become an "*informatore*" of the police and spy on his fellow-deportees). Families which receive the necessary permission are subject to the same rules as the deportees, concerning which they get a clear idea upon landing, as a severe personal examination is made, men and women being completely undressed.

The mixing of political and criminal offenders which continued for many years, and to a certain extent continues still, was a feature of the penal islands against which the *politicos* long protested in vain.

In his speech of May 26, 1927, Mussolini announced that "all the

political prisoners were separated from the common criminals, and were concentrated in two islands only."

That this statement was not in accordance with the true position is shown by the fact that at Ustica, in 1929, less than 50 political deportees were obliged to live in common with about one thousand criminals. Concerning the serious inconveniences, and even dangers, of this compulsory cohabitation of intellectuals and confirmed criminals, many of violent character, there is no need to write.

At Ponza, again, in 1929, a young political suspect of good family and brilliant academic attainments was obliged to sleep close to a so-called *confinato politico* who was in reality a beggar from Rome, as dirty and drunken as a man can be.

After the Fascist Government had announced the separation of political deportees and common offenders, the penal population of Ponza included some midwives charged with forbidden practices, fraudulent company promoters, usurers, beggars and degenerates—many of whom were rather proud to find themselves classified as "political victims."

The "barracks" in which many of the political deportees are obliged to live during their stay in the islands are unbelievably primitive and unhealthy. There were ten such barracks at Ustica; some of them, which were built on the seashore, had not even a proper floor, being just sheds set down on the bare ground.

At Ponza the deportees live in the old Bourbon prison; a quadrangular building consisting of a set of small cells facing a narrow courtyard—the cells having inside doors opening on to a wide corridor. The deportees dwell not only in the cells but in the corridor as well, the distance from bed to bed rarely exceeding half a yard. The only washing-place is in the courtyard, and the only lavatory, without any window, at the end of the corridor! A century ago the prisoners confined in this building used to sleep only in the cells, the corridor being kept clear. Nowadays the Fascist militia guards the only entrance to the prison, the gateway of which is locked each night.

Those deportees who are permitted to sleep in lodgings outside the "barracks" (mainly at Lipari) are visited several times during the night by the guards, police and militia entering the houses at any hour to satisfy themselves that the deportee is still there. One month of *confinio* under these conditions is so trying that very few among the relatives of the deportees can stand the islands for a longer period.

In order to economise in their food bills, the deportees usually join in groups of twenty or thirty, establishing a sort of co-operative canteen. To this end, they hire a room with a cooking stove, and each deportee acts in turn as cook or waiter or dish-washer. Some of these "*mense*" established by the deportees are very inexpensive, but, prices being high on the islands, it has proved almost impossible to produce a day's food (lunch and dinner) for less than one shilling per

head. How, therefore, can the deportees (who now receive only five *lira*—1s. 1d.—a day) provide for the other unavoidable expenses : clothes, laundry, shoes, postages, etc. ?

An attempt was made on one island to reduce costs by the organisation of a " co-operative " planned and run by the exiles themselves in order to provide their fellow-deportees with necessities at low prices, but this store was closed down by the authorities in September, 1927, in view of suspicions that the benefits of the business were utilised in helping the poorest among the deportees. More probably, the authorities acted under pressure from local shopkeepers, who were suffering from this unexpected attempt to break their virtual monopoly. It is unnecessary to add that the suspicions of the authorities regarding the destination of profits were quite unfounded ; all profits being used to cut prices still further and thus benefit the whole body of deportees.

A similar fate awaited another form of activity undertaken by the educated exiles.

In order to banish the depressing monotony of the slowly-passing weeks, which pressed as heavily as did the rigorous discipline upon all but the poorest and most ignorant section of the deportees, the intellectuals in every island (and particularly at Ustica and Lipari) organised adult schools, where the exiles provided instruction to their own numbers and others in such varied subjects as geography, history, drawing, philosophy, etc. Every lesson was attended by a police officer or militiaman as a witness ; despite this circumstance, which absolutely debarred the teachers from converting the lessons (as was afterwards declared) into political meetings, the schools—the only occupation, in many cases, for the deportees who eagerly attended them—were very soon prohibited by the authorities, having remained in being from March until October, 1927.

Among such minor annoyances of the *confino* must be mentioned the postal regulations ; not only are letters and papers submitted to the strictest censorship, but this task is entrusted to a completely unqualified and ignorant staff, hence delay in the distribution of letters, misunderstandings, and constant violation of secrecy. Indeed, in some cases the whole population of an island follow, through the gossip passed on by the censors, the sentimental, financial and other phases of the lives of the deportees.

Agents provocateurs are not unknown on these isles of deportation. Indeed, these police spies are always attempting to " promote " attempts to escape or provoke violence to justify police interference. A classic achievement of these *agents* happened at Lipari and Ustica during the summer of 1927. Zealous spies headed by an *agent provocateur* named Canovi¹ succeeded in convincing the authorities that the deportees, as a whole, were keeping in touch with friends in France, in order to organise a mass escape, and that, while waiting

¹ See Chapter XVIII.

for the arrival of the ship which was to rescue them, they had resolved to poison the militiamen and *carabineers*, to cut the telegraph wires and make themselves masters of the two islands.

The authorities on the spot, unable to discover the truth of this dark story, informed the Central Government, and Rome ordered wholesale arrests. No fewer than two hundred political deportees were arrested in a single night, and later shipped to Palermo and Messina, for trial by the Special Tribunal.

The arrests at Ustica were carried out under dramatic circumstances. It was a dark, windy night, with wild waves washing on the shore of the tiny island, when militiamen and *carabineers*, in groups of twenty and thirty, carrying torches swarmed down the lanes of the village to the various dwellings where lived the men marked down for arrest.

The unknown destination of these unfortunates, who had no idea what it was all about, the despair of the relatives (some of whom had to leave the island, alone with their children, that same night) and the rough treatment to which the prisoners were subjected during their short journey to the shore, made that September night of 1927, for those who lived through it, a tragic experience.

The upshot of the "plot" was that the whole two hundred remained in prison for ten months, under a charge which might have meant, under Fascist law, a sentence of death. Only after that time did the Special Tribunal begin its investigations, and being unable to find a single word of truth in the whole story, set the prisoners free and returned them to serve the remainder of their sentences on the islands.

The anguish suffered by the relatives of those thus falsely accused, may be illustrated by one occurrence on Ustica. Among those arrested were two brothers deported from Rome. Their mother, a poor working woman who had come to the island in order to share their hardships, on seeing one of her sons, handcuffed, passing through the little square of the village, together with some fifteen other deportees, could not restrain herself from shouting to him words of encouragement and love. She was immediately arrested and sent to prison.

After every attempt, or suspected attempt, to escape, conditions became more severe, and prosecutions more frequent. Thus after the escape of Nitti, Lussu and Rosselli from Lipari in July, 1929, the Fascists arrested a deportee named Paolo Fabbri, as a reprisal for the one successful escape in the history of the island.

Fabbri had played no part in the bid for freedom made by the three men, and the only evidence which the police who searched his house could produce at the trial was a waterproof bag "found under a piece of furniture." Fabbri denied all knowledge of it, and declared it had been "planted" there by the police themselves, following the usual practice of the Fascists when seeking to provide evidence. What



ITALIAN SOLDIERS FIND MATTEOTTI'S COAT IN THE DRAINAGE TUNNEL, WHERE THE BODY OF THE
MURDERED DEPUTY WAS DISCOVERED

happened after that has been recorded in a statement signed by the three who escaped, dated from Paris, March 9, 1930 :

" The police then corrupted a witness, a certain Jacono, of Lipari, but the latter fell into such contradictions that his deposition was set aside as worthless. Next a subtler trick was tried. Another deportee from Lipari was imprisoned in the same cell as Fabbri, a certain Piemonte, who turned out later to be a spy. His task was to get Fabbri to make some confidence. Fabbri had none to make and made none. But one fine day the *Commissario* of Police of Milazzo, a certain Greco, denounced Fabbri, declaring falsely that the spy had informed him that Fabbri had confessed everything.

" The trial took place at Messina on January 23 last against us three and Fabbri. We had sent the judges a formal explicit declaration excluding all and every collaboration on the part of Fabbri, as of all our other friends and comrades on the island. One by one all the absurd accusations of the police fell through. Both Jacono and Piemonte retracted their first declarations. The judges, in private, expressed their conviction of Fabbri's innocence, and even in court clearly showed their sympathy for him, but at the same time gave it clearly to be understood that explicit orders to condemn had come from Rome. The presiding judge pronounced the sentence—three years and four months' imprisonment and 20,000 *lira* fine—with lowered head and shame-faced look."

The routine on Lipari is similar to that on the other islands of deportation. The deportees have to live in the centre of the town, where they are confined to three streets about three-quarters of a mile long altogether. They must not go beyond the town limits, which are marked by twelve pickets of armed guards. Thus even the solace of such countryside as Lipari offers is forbidden to them. At seven p.m. in winter and nine p.m. in summer they must return either to the prison quarters in the old castle, or to private rooms where this privilege has been granted by the police. A roll-call is taken forty-five minutes later, and another roll-call at eight next morning.

There are about thirteen thousand inhabitants on the island, and not a few of them have found the deportees profitable.

" We soon found it was impossible to keep body and soul together with our allowance of ten *liras* a day,"¹ writes Signor Nitti.² " Rents were very high ; hovels of two or three rooms cost two or three hundred *liras* a month. The inhabitants were growing rich on the deportees. Even fruit, which is plentiful in all this region, was sold to us at an exorbitant price. In Lipari, as in Lampedusa, the natives laboured under the delusion that we were all wealthy and they were justified in exploiting us. We had not been long on the island before many new stores were opened for our exclusive benefit. In reality,

¹ Now reduced to five *lira* a day.

² *Escape*.

the majority of the deportees were practically without private means and many of them almost starved to death on their pitiful allowance, in spite of the aid which their more fortunate comrades extended to them.¹

"After long and wearisome formalities, a certain number of deportees were allowed to have their families come and join them on the island. Some of my companions sent for their wives and children, who had, in many cases, been left destitute when they were arrested, and tried to make a living as best they could. It wasn't easy. The pumice quarries—which represent the chief industry of the island—are situated at Canneto, which is out of bounds for the deportees, who are, consequently, not allowed to work in them. For a time, some of the deportees found work at the castle, which was undergoing repairs. Others worked as tailors or shoemakers in the town. Two or three of us had the good fortune to be employed at the electric power plant which supplied the town with light.

"There was a good deal of misery among the deportees, many of whom had spent all their money in the weeks following their arrest and in supporting their families while they were in jail."

How many Italians have thus suffered for the "crime" of holding opinions, or being suspected of holding opinions, distasteful to *Il Duce*? An official Italian *communiqué* issued on November 30, 1926, declared that the number of political suspects deported to the islands was 522. A few weeks later, a further statement gave the number at 942, while in his speech of May 26, 1927, Mussolini declared that only 698 persons had been deported up to that date, and challenged anyone to deny the figure.

As the *personnel* of the deportees is constantly changing, and no list of names has ever been published, exact figures are difficult to secure. But it is known that, at the time of Mussolini's speech, there were 400 deportees on Ustica and 450 on Lipari, to name only two of the places of detention.

At the beginning of 1930 there were still about one thousand political deportees confined on the islands. A further thousand had completed their sentences and returned to their homes, where they remain under police supervision as "suspects."

According to the Fascist Government, all but a handful of the deportees are anarchists or Communists. Thus the Fascists hope to hide their "war" upon freedom of speech and belief by raising a "Red" bogey. The facts are very different.

"The Italian Government admitted in January, 1927, that in addition to the thousands of persons convicted by regular Courts, 942 persons tried by self-appointed Fascist Courts had been exiled to the islands of Ustica, Lampedusa, Favignana, Tantelleria, horrible waterless, criminal-infested islands which constitute

¹ Such an act of charity is a "crime," punishable by immediate arrest and several years' imprisonment. See *Escapé*, p. 149.

Italy's Siberia. Mussolini once stated that only anarchists and communists are sent there, but it is a fact, discovered by an American newspaperman, that Liberal and Catholic deputies, editors, moderate Socialists, professors and professional men, most of whom have written something unfavourable to *Fascismo* or critical of Mussolini, constitute the majority in exile."¹

That statement by an impartial American journalist is fully in accord with the proven facts. He might have gone further and stated that all but a handful of the hundreds of persons convicted by the Special Tribunal, or exiled by administrative order, are guilty of no crime recognisable by any enlightened nation where opinion is free, and that the Fascist Government has no possible justification, under the laws of humanity or civilisation, for depriving them of their liberty.

The majority of deportees are men of democratic, but not extreme, convictions. Mr. Lloyd George and Sir John Simon as well as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Philip Snowden, and, of course, Mr. Maxton, would in Italy have been deported long ago for their opinions. And their parties would have been declared "illegal societies" by a political party opposed to them which was unable to secure a majority in the Chamber so long as free elections existed. Many members of the Conservative Party would likewise have been shipped off to Lipari and Ponza.

There are but three ways of returning to the outside world. To serve the full sentence, to escape, or to appeal to Mussolini for clemency.

To secure a pardon the deportee must write a letter declaring that he has seen the error of his opinions, hailing the Fascists as the saviours of Italy, and pledging good political behaviour in future. Such letters are published, and the pardons resulting hailed by the "kept" press of modern Italy as fresh evidence of the magnanimity of the beloved *Duce*. If one remembers that the men thus pardoned have been imprisoned and exiled without trial, or after secret trial, for such offences as belonging to Liberal or Socialist parties, or voicing democratic sentiments, it is not surprising that the more prominent prisoners prefer to remain and serve their full sentences rather than recant their opinions.

When, from time to time, deportees are liberated before completing their sentences, the Fascist press does not fail to applaud the "mercy and generosity" of the head of the State. Thus after Mussolini had, in 1926, cancelled ten sentences of deportation and reduced forty-five more to police supervision only, the *Corriere d'Italia* stated:

"Where could one find more touching evidence of the *Duce's* kindly complicity and warm and vibrating humanity, ever ready to yield to the promptings of the heart?"

¹ *The Truth behind the News*, by George Seldes (Faber & Gwyer, London, 1929), p. 53.

And the Rome *Tevere* wrote :

" "This is the monstrous tyranny of Italy, this man who, with magnificent clemency, opens the gates of prisons to his enemies and detractors of yesterday."

Mr. Baldwin has said some hard things about Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and his policy. One has only to imagine the Labour Administration ordering Mr. Baldwin's arrest and banishment to the Hebrides, without trial and without any charge against him being formulated, followed later by Mr. MacDonald's "magnificent clemency" in deigning to order the release of the Conservative leader as evidence of his own "warm and vibrating humanity," to realise that comment is superfluous.

One day the full story of Italy's Siberias will be told to the world. At present the curtain of silence which is preserved by warships, armed motor-boats and guards lifts but rarely. Visitors are not encouraged, for obvious reasons, or, if permitted under special circumstances, are subjected to so strict a supervision that nothing can be discovered.

For years newspaper correspondents of many nations who knew that one of the biggest newspaper sensations of recent times lay hidden behind the warships and guns of those penal islands have been trying to overcome the reluctance of the Fascist Government to provide facilities for them to inspect the conditions under which the deportees live. In 1929 a famous French journalist, M. Beraud, of the *Petit Parisien*, secured the personal permission of the Duce to visit Lipari. He went there, and in his book *Ce que j'ai vu a Rome* (Paris, 1929, pp. 123-133) he relates the story of his visit.

M. Beraud had been promised complete freedom to carry out investigations on Lipari, but upon his arrival at the port of Lipari he was met, not only by the Governor of the settlement, but also by the Chief of the Italian police, who had travelled from Rome to conduct him round the island.

"The table was laid in the best inn," writes M. Beraud. "They let me taste the *malvasia* of Lipari, a wine made from sulphur and flowers. They gave me photographs and booklets. I was overwhelmed with attentions. They allowed me to visit, at racing speed, some barracks, disinfected in my honour. Most of them were empty, as the convicts prefer rooms in town, for which they have to pay, to those handsome free premises, with beds marvellously disposed in straight rows. . . . We walked like this, *tambour battant*, with eyes burned by the sun, from one building to another. Every fifty steps there was a man with whiskers and big boots, standing upright and greeting us, while we passed, in Roman fashion. Notwithstanding the speed at which we walked, I could not be prevented from seeing, in street after street, amongst the men who did not greet our beautiful official group, people with tired and sad faces, a big boy who turned

away, his eyes crying . . . some others, young and old, took silent drinks at the terraces of taverns . . . and then others and others. There are four hundred in the town of Lipari. Most of them pretended not to see us. But others looked at us, and in their eyes I saw a terrible mixture of distress and irony. I could not stand it any more. We were approaching the offices of the Governor:

“ ‘Sir,’ I said, ‘I want to talk to some of the confined.’ ”

“ ‘But surely,’ replied my host, ‘nothing would be easier.’ He turned to one of the group. ‘Send for the barrister that speaks French so well.’ ”

“ The barrister arrived and was presented to me. He looks at the Chief of Police, at the Parisian journalist, the police office, the white wall, the portrait of *Il Duce*. The barrister smiles. The barrister thinks the weather is good and the summer will probably be a hot one. He hopes I had a nice journey. Then he contemplates once more the portrait of the *Duce*, the furniture, the walls, the Chief of Police, the French enquirer. And then, smiling, he asks for permission to withdraw. ”

“ ‘Could I not speak with him quite alone?’ I enquire. ”

“ ‘A cigar?’ suggested the Chief of Police. ”

“ ‘But . . .’ I begin. ”

“ Never in this country, where they hear everything, and so well, were there deafer ears. It was useless to insist. And then my host had other things to show me—churches, views, a hundred things curious and particular. Much more interesting if they could be believed than the recriminations of this always disgruntled population of deportees. To such courteous offers I answered with many thanks that I was sorry, but my occupation did not allow me to behave as a tourist. ”

“ ‘You are in a hurry?’ my host asked, in a tone which suggested that he was doing his best for me. ‘We are going to take you back in a *motoscafo*. Yes, yes, it will be a pleasure for us to do so, a real pleasure.’ ”

“ He put so much fire in it, that the Devil himself would not doubt about it. Immediately the boat was ready—a powerful 70 h.p. motor-boat. They put me on board with every care. We were going away. The motor roars. Lipari slips away and we are gliding out to sea at record speed. Above our heads is waving the crowned banner of Italy. An officer, all in white, is standing at the prow. The Chief of the Police and the Governor of Lipari are with me. They have brought cigarettes and drinks with them. They will not part from me until the very end—until they are sure that I am in the train, journeying towards Messina, and that they have accomplished their hospitable duty. ”

Thus the secrets of Lipari, Ponza and Ustica—*islands of exile*—are kept from the outside world.

CHAPTER XVII

THE REVIVAL OF TORTURE

"We think of the cruelty and oppression of the past and wonder how human beings could possibly resort to such things. Persecution, we say, belongs with the 'Dark Ages' when mankind was ignorant and barbarous; I assure you the men of those ages were not very different from ourselves."

EVERETT DEAN MARTIN in "*Liberty*."

THE reports of assaults, bordering upon torture, made upon opponents of the Fascist régime which reached the outside world immediately preceding and during the early months of the Fascist Government, were accepted as the inevitable accompaniment of the breakdown of public order, and the presence in Italy of a period of chaos during which bands of armed and excitable individuals, many of whom sincerely believed their country to be in danger of a Communist rising, instigated a reign of terror which was in essence a patriotic crusade.

Whether the Fascist crimes of 1920 and 1921 were justified by conditions, and especially whether they need have occurred had not the Fascists been overtly encouraged by army and police, who punished "reprisals" by Socialists and Communists with savage barbarity and permitted the Fascists to attack their adversaries with impunity, is a question for the historian of the future to answer. Of more immediate importance is what has occurred since 1926, when the passing of the special decree setting up the Special Tribunals suppressed irresponsible action against political offenders and concentrated punitive powers in the hands of magistrates appointed under the direct supervision of the *Duce* himself.

The world has now had over four years in which to judge how far the present laws are an improvement on the state of affairs which preceded 1926. What has happened? Unhappily, there is ample evidence to show that while deportation at the hands of the authorities has replaced pitched battles and violent death at the hands of authorised or unauthorised bands of militiamen seeking by an overdose of enthusiasm to please their superiors or to "strengthen" the Fascist State, torture of a kind which has been unknown in civilised Europe, outside Russia, for a century, is not unknown in Mussolini's Italy. And in some cases at least that torture has been continued until death has come to release the luckless "political" victim from further suffering at the call of conscience.

A particularly terrible example of this phase of conditions in Italy to-day, and one which has been fully authenticated by independent foreign enquiry, was the arrest and death of Gastone Sozzi.

Sozzi was a young Communist, twenty-five years of age. Doubtless, as an active Communist, his political views were much the same as those held by Communists the world over. Doubtless, also, he did not conceal his antagonism towards the present régime. That in itself was foolhardiness bordering upon suicide.

The inevitable happened. Early in December, 1927, he was arrested, away from his home, and lodged in prison. His family were not notified, and naturally were very worried about his disappearance. They applied to lawyers for help in tracing his whereabouts, and the lawyers sought the aid of the police, but the search, as is not surprising under the circumstances, was unsuccessful.

Two months later, his family received the first news of his whereabouts—a few short notes, dated from the town jail at Perugia, in which Sozzi informed them only that he was hoping it might be possible for him to see some of his relatives, and especially his young wife and the child which had been born during his absence, in a short time.

The first official intimation of any sort concerning his fate that reached his family was a bald statement that "Gastone Sozzi hanged himself in a cell of the military prison at Perugia." This announcement of his death in prison was amplified by a message published in the *Popolo d'Italia* of March 1, 1928, which declared :

"The private soldier, Gastone Sozzi, committed suicide by hanging himself on the window bars of his cell in the military prison of Perugia, where he was detained at the disposal of the military tribunal of the army corps of Milan."

Concerning this statement, it need only be added that Sozzi was not a private soldier ; that there is no military prison at Perugia, and that he was a prisoner, not of the military, but of the Fascist Special Tribunal which deals with all political opponents. The date of the suicide was not given, but later the *Lavoro* of Genoa, on March 2, 1928, published a telegram from Perugia, stating that Sozzi had committed suicide on the previous night in the ordinary gaol (*carceri giudiziarie*) in Perugia.

The news of his death by suicide both shocked and surprised his relatives and friends, for his letters were held to give sufficient proof that he had no idea of suicide shortly before the date on which it was stated to have occurred ; on the contrary he had expressed hopes of early release. Sozzi was a strong man, young and enthusiastic, with great will-power. No one who knew him considered him the type of man who would, under any conditions, give way to despair.

In view of these facts, it was natural that rumours should begin to circulate that Sozzi had not committed suicide. When it became known that his relatives had not been allowed to see the body after death, that it had been taken from the prison to Cesena, not far away, in a closed van under a guard of *carabineers* and militia, and there buried secretly—friends, family or relations not being allowed to accompany the coffin to the burial-place—the rumours grew into definite statements that Sozzi had been tortured, and that the authorities had not permitted anyone to see the body lest the marks of murder, and not suicide, might be seen.

The case would have been entirely forgotten, or at least never reached the public ear, but for the fact that these reports leaked across the French border, and reached the *Committee for the Defence of the Victims of Fascism* in Paris—a committee which includes among its members Romain Rolland, Ferdinand Buisson, Einstein, Henri Barbusse and others prominent in art, politics and science in Europe.

The Committee applied to the Italian Ambassador in Paris for particulars of the case, and requested that permission be granted to make an international investigation into the charges which had reached them. The request was refused and, further, no information was forthcoming. The Committee thereupon publicly announced that, despite this refusal, they would proceed to make an investigation without the assistance of the Italian authorities.

As a result of this announcement and other measures taken by the Committee which cannot be particularised here, there was received from fellow-prisoners and from other sources known to the writer to be of proved authenticity, information which shed a lurid light on events in that prison cell at Perugia, and which fully explains the reluctance of the Italian Government to permit the facts, as distinct from the convenient official *communiqué* reporting the "suicide," to be known.

In their report the Committee stated : " Gastone Sozzi was brought into the prison at Perugia in the first days of December, 1927, under the guard of six Fascist militiamen, dressed in civil clothes. Despite his powerful physique, he appeared to be ill and exhausted, and his face bore the signs of beating and violence. There Sozzi was placed in an underground cell in which criminals passed short disciplinary punishment. On the second day of his incarceration, the prison was visited by General Ciardi, military attorney to the Special Tribunal, and by the Inspector of the Ministry of Home Affairs. These officials brought with them a formal mandate from Mussolini to secure by every possible means a confession from Sozzi concerning anti-Fascist organisations in that part of Italy.

" Verbal examination proving fruitless, they started to torture him. He was beaten with fists and sticks, and later sent back to his cell and kept for a few days without food. As he still refused to give any information concerning anti-Fascist activities, the torture was continued. It continued, without yielding any evidence, for the whole of December and January.

" At the beginning of February the inquisitors decided that more drastic measures were called for, and another ' remedy ' was brought into action. A solution of iodine was injected internally (under revolting circumstances), causing great pain from burning in the stomach. With a short interruption, this treatment was continued for a whole week. At the end of that time the victim's intestines were one large wound, and the pain had driven him near to madness. Still no denunciation was forthcoming. In the midst of his agony, he was

offered his liberty immediately and a salary of 5000 *lira* monthly if he would consent to accept a post in the Fascist police. Despite his suffering he refused. After that General Ciardi lost patience, and in the night of February 6, 1928, Gastone Sozzi was murdered in his cell."

Such are the alleged facts concerning the death of one obscure prisoner of Fascism, as reported by this Committee of eminent public men, only one of whom, M. Barbusse, is a Communist. Terrible, indeed, unbelievable, as are those facts, they are fully authenticated, and the letter signed by Henri Barbusse, a member of the Committee, reporting the results of their investigations was published generally in the French press, including the Conservative newspapers.

Beatings and physical violence against prisoners occur so frequently, both before their trial and after, that they may be said to have a definite place in the curriculum of Italian police procedure.

Paolo Betti was arrested in Milan in May, 1927, and handed over to the Fascist militia at Brescia. Some weeks later he was transferred to the prison hospital, having lost his reason as the result of the ill-treatment he had undergone. Romolo Tranquilli was arrested in Como on April 15, 1928, and taken to Milan. A few days later he was admitted into hospital at San Vittore with two broken ribs and his head badly injured by floggings he had received. These two examples of Fascist violence against prisoners were duly published in France, and have not been contradicted by the Italian authorities.

The methods employed to make a suspect "talk" do not always stop at flogging, as the case of Gastone Sozzi shows. Burning by boiling water, beating with iron sticks, garrotting—all these methods of torture have been applied *during the period of the legal enquiry and before the passing of sentence.*

Among the deportees at present on the island of Lipari is a Roman workman named Del Giudice, a Communist. He was arrested on suspicion of complicity in a Communist plot against the Government. Severe cross-examination failed to wring from him a confession, so other methods were tried. He was first beaten, but not severely. When this did not produce the desired evidence, he was taken out of Rome to a lonely spot in the countryside, and a cord was knotted round his neck so tightly that he lost consciousness. Recovering his senses, he still declared his innocence of any knowledge of a political plot. Whereupon his captors bound him to a tree, a firing squad of Fascist militia were drawn up in front of him, and the stage set for execution by shooting. The victim had not the desired information to give, nor the wit to concoct it, and had his captors been bent upon anything more serious than intimidation, he would have died there and then. When all efforts to make him talk had failed, he was returned to prison and later sentenced to deportation.

Milo, an invalid workman with one arm, Capecci, a mechanic, and a man named Preziosi were arrested in Rome charged with being

accessories in a plot against the Government. They were placed in an underground cell in the Magnanapoli Barracks, over the entrance to which was the promising inscription, "From here no one comes out alive." The "legal enquiry" began with beatings. The police demanded from the accused the names of their confederates. To secure this evidence, the three men were flogged so long and so methodically upon several occasions that they lost consciousness. All three are now on the island of Lipari.

Two further victims of Fascist violence were Dr. Mario Vinciguerra and Renzo Rendi, who were arrested on November 28, 1930, on charges concerned with the preparation and distribution of clandestine pamphlets for the *Alleanza Nazionale*, an anti-Fascist organisation, as recorded in a later chapter.¹

Upon arrest Vinciguerra was taken to the *Questura* (police station) situated in the *Collegio Romano*. Following his refusal to reveal the names of his accomplices, he was undressed and left naked in the open air all night. The following morning, he was taken to the Regina Cœli Prison and placed in a large room used for the interrogation of accused political prisoners. There further attempts were made to make him confess the names of those who had been associated with him in opposing the régime, during which blows were struck; one officer striking him so violently on the right ear that it caused a rupture of the ear-drum and deafness.

Rendi also was beaten, and also some of the others arrested with him. These attempts to loosen their tongues by physical violence are said to have been directed by Menichingheri, Commissioner of Police.

Vinciguerra was later advised by his counsel not to make any public declaration of the violence to which he had been subjected, in the hope that silence might lighten his sentence. His reticence did not, however, affect the verdict of the Special Tribunal—as recorded later both men were condemned to fifteen years' imprisonment.

Such cases of official violence are, indeed, so numerous that a mere recital of them becomes monotonous. The facts are not in dispute. Violence is to-day an integral part of the judicial system of Italy, and is most frequently employed against political prisoners, charged with "political conspiracy and subversive propaganda" under the decree of 1926, which dissolved all political parties other than the Fascist Party, and made any propaganda on the part of Socialists, Communists or Republicans illegal, and even the possession of Socialist literature a crime punishable with the utmost rigour of the law.

The violence against prisoners on the mainland finds its counterpart on the deportation islands. But whereas for obvious reasons news of happenings behind the prison walls is often only known months after the events take place—if at all—authenticated cases of violence offered by guards to groups of deportees cannot be suppressed indefinitely. Sooner or later someone who was present on the island

¹ See Chapter XVIII.

at the time returns to civilisation or manages to smuggle the facts through the iron ring to the outside world.

On a date unknown, but which may be placed somewhere at the beginning of September, 1929, tragic events took place behind the curtain of silence which surrounds the plight of the *politicos* who are interned on the island of Ponza.

According to the known facts, it is alleged that two political prisoners met two Fascist militiamen in a street. Either the prisoners did not see these guards and did not salute them, or the guards had drunk unwisely of the wine of the region. Whatever the cause of following events, it was trivial.

The militiamen imagined that they had been insulted by the contemptible "politicals" and attacked them, first with insults and then with blows. Blood flowed and the cries of the combatants brought inhabitants and other prisoners upon the scene. Attempts were made to bring the two Fascists to their senses, and some of the prisoners pointed out that, whatever the cause of the disturbance, to beat unmercifully two unarmed and defenceless men was an abuse of power.

Criticism from prisoners brought matters to a head. The Fascists drew their revolvers and fired, wounding some of the prisoners. Other Fascists, called by the sound of shooting, were speedily upon the scene, and the hunt began.

The guards apparently held the view that it was necessary to track down those who had protested against the attack upon the unarmed prisoners, and equally necessary to terrorise the inhabitants of Ponza, so that none should give sanctuary to the men they sought. For two hours the 250 Fascist militiamen of the garrison scoured the island in groups, firing their revolvers and rifles indiscriminately in the air, or at unfortunate persons who sought to conceal themselves wherever any cover offered itself. Houses were raided and ransacked in the hunt. A young woman who resembled the wife of one of the prisoners for whom they were seeking was called upon—at the point of a revolver—to tell them where her supposed husband was hiding. The shock was so great that she nearly lost her reason.

During this day of terror, two militiamen were injured in circumstances which deserve to be placed upon record.

In the course of the man-hunt, the two militiamen began to search along a street where two of the most notable prisoners of Fascism live. One is General Bencivenga, and the other Misuri, the former Fascist deputy who was nearly assassinated following a critical speech which he delivered in the Italian Parliament.

Hearing the noise and shots, the two distinguished prisoners went to the window of their house and enquired what was happening. The two militiamen, by now probably much excited, hurled insults at them and raised their rifles. But they had forgotten that these two prisoners were under the special and constant surveillance of *cara-bineers*, whose instructions were to see that no harm befel them. Two

or three were within call, and to disarm and arrest the too enthusiastic Fascist guards was the work of a moment. The two men were taken under escort to the guard-room. What happened there is not known. But it is known that there is a long-standing antagonism between the two arms of the Fascist forces. And it is also known that those two militiamen were duly posted as wounded in "quelling a riot among the prisoners." Maybe it was this incident which caused the Chief of Police responsible for the district to come hurrying from Naples at all speed.

More damaging to Fascist prestige, when the news reached foreign countries, was an incident which caused the closing of Lampedusa as an island of deportation, as recorded in a previous chapter.

The full account of the incident, as told by Signor Francesco Nitti, who was present at the time,¹ is as follows :

"The most dramatic episode came on January 14, 1927, about 9 p.m. Since 4.30 we had been locked up in the big chamber and had supped on what little we had been able to bring from the village. Some of us were chatting, others writing to their families, others trying to read. One group of Roman deportees began to sing old love songs in the Roman dialect, while others listened in silence. All at once the door was thrown open, and Lieutenant Veronica, the police commissioner, the Fascist militia and the *carabineers* rushed in. The *carabineers* had fixed their bayonets, and the policemen held their pistols ready. 'Hands up,' shouted Veronica. He threw himself on one of the Romans who had been singing, struck him and knocked him down. Meanwhile the militia, *carabineers* and policemen used their fists and the butt-ends of their carbines upon us right and left. Then Veronica chose, haphazard, twenty deportees and ordered them out. They were all handcuffed in the dark. We thought they would be shot. Not until next day did we hear that Veronica intended to send them before a Special Fascist Tribunal for having sung 'revolutionary' songs.

"In point of fact, the twenty were taken to a cell in the prison where Veronica, surrounded by his armed guard, went up to a young fellow whom he had first struck, Pietro Rossi of Rome, and ordered him to shout, 'Long live the King!' Rossi remained silent. Then the lieutenant drew his dagger and pressed the point against Rossi's chest, repeating the order. Rossi made no sound. Veronica then pushed the point of the dagger into Rossi's flesh, ordering him again to shout 'Long live the King'—with the same result. Further and further went the steel into the poor fellow's chest until his clothes were soaked with blood and he fainted. His companions, horror-stricken, but held at bay by the armed militia, witnessed the scene trembling with impotent rage. Nor was this enough. Rossi having fallen, a big Fascist, at an order from

¹ *Review of Reviews*, September 14, 1929.

Veronica, jumped upon Rossi, kicked, cuffed and spat upon him. So abominable was the scene that one of the policemen present protested, and was sharply rebuked by Veronica. Then the cell was locked and the wounded man passed the night on some planks, together with his nineteen sleepless companions."

Another episode which occurred on Lipari was the removal to Messina of a deportee named Del Moro, who had knocked down an armed captain of the Fascist militia who had twice insulted him in an effort to provoke a quarrel and thus have excuse for "disciplinary" action. Shortly after reaching Messina, Del Moro was sent to a lunatic asylum—where he died. He had been in full possession of his mental faculties on Lipari, was young and strong, and his death in captivity has never been satisfactorily explained. Nor have enquiries made by his family produced any information whatever.

More recently, a man named Antonini, a political deportee, was ferociously bludgeoned in a public street, and another deportee, Paolinelli, was required to strip in order that his clothes might be searched, and then left naked for several hours in a low temperature "as a joke."

In another case in which I have the reports of eye-witnesses, a deportee named Filipich from Istria, one of the Irredentist provinces, succumbed to the effects of the atrocious bludgeoning he received, which broke several ribs.

Early in 1930, on Lipari, militiamen wounded more than fifty persons, of whom half were inhabitants, in the course of a disturbance, and reliable reports which have reached me from the island reveal that "arrests, outrages and beatings are of daily occurrence."

Nor is mental torture neglected. Correspondence between deportees and their families is frequently and illegally suppressed, sometimes for months, causing great and unnecessary anguish for the prisoner concerned. Frequently the punishment inflicted by the Special Tribunal is doubled by the persecution of those left behind, persecution which makes it impossible in the case of poor families for them to secure work or the wherewithal to purchase food.

During recent months a new form of "refined" mental torture has been evolved by the militiamen garrisoning Ponza. Threats of personal violence not being sufficient to terrorise the more intellectual of the political prisoners confined there, or perhaps because such violence caused the inhabitants to side with the persecuted, the Fascists composed ribald songs insulting the events, men and ideas held dear by the exiles, and sang these up and down the streets, or while on duty on the little beach. To be forced to listen to insults and obscenities at the expense of their beliefs for several hours a day, while knowing that any retort will play into the hands of the Fascists and bring swift personal violence, is a form of intimidation worthy of a darker age.

It may be that these instances of violence directed against unarmed and helpless prisoners are due to enthusiastic Fascist officials who have exceeded and abused their powers. It may be, though it is a theory difficult to substantiate in the face of the evidence contained in this chapter, that the Italian Government deplors these excesses. But it remains true that in Italy the law does not protect the political prisoner against ill-treatment. It is impossible to imagine such abuses of the prison administration or police being tolerated in the European democracies where the rights of even the recidivist are jealously guarded by those who administer justice. The saddest reflection is that in all these cases, with the exception of one or two which provoked a public scandal (such as the cruelties of Veronica), no disciplinary action has been taken, as far as is known, against the perpetrators of these crimes, many of whom remain in the service of the Fascist State.

That fact suggests that even though physical torture may not be an integral part of Fascist methods of repression, when instances do occur it is the policy of those concerned with the purity of Fascist justice to hush them up rather than to expose and remove those responsible.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAR WITHOUT END

"The Tribunal will allow me to quote my personal experience, not because this experience has in any way contributed to determine my opposition (to the Fascist régime)—on the contrary—but because my experience is typical. I had a house in Italy. It was taken away from me. I had a newspaper and I was driven away from it. I had a professional chair and it was suppressed. I had friends: Matteotti, Amendola and others, and they were killed. Every means of suppression was employed. We will continue the fight. The right to resist has been repeatedly preached in the history of the world. We are prepared to go to prison, but we shall continue the fight as long as we live. By doing so we represent the cause of civilisation."

CARLO ROSSELLI, in a speech before the Swiss Federal Tribunal,

November, 1930.

DISTRIBUTED over Europe, but concentrated mainly in France and Belgium, are the *fuorusciti* (the "fleeing ones"), groups of Italian political exiles composed of those who left Italy rather than submit to the conditions of the dictatorship, or who have escaped from that land. These exiles, among whom are many of the noblest and greatest Italians of our generation, carry on a never-ending war for their ideals against Fascism.

Among these refugees there are some who, owing to their exasperation or their candour, are potential victims of the manœuvres of Fascist spies.

It is, indeed, the presence abroad of these intellectual anarchists and impatient or imprudent anti-Fascists which provides whatever justification exists for the persistent and often ill-advised activities of the Fascist *agents provocateurs*.

These Fascist spies, regularly employed by the Italian Government, may be divided into two categories; those whose method it is to approach political exiles with offers of their services in carrying out individual terrorist acts in Italy, and those who profess that the moment is ripe for attempting a serious revolutionary movement against *Fascismo*, and who are prepared to plan the movement and assist exiles to return to Italy to participate in it.

The sole *raison d'être* for the Fascist *agent provocateur* is to instigate active violence against the Italian Government, in order either that political opponents of the régime may be induced to return to Italy and there be arrested, or that the "plots" may, at a given moment, be disclosed to the authorities of the country concerned, and the anti-Fascists thus discredited, or brought to trial for illegal conspiracy and abusing the right of asylum.

The *agent provocateur*, whether Fascist or other, depends upon a glib tongue and an ability to act a part. The procedure followed is for the *agent*, duly armed with a ready tale of undying hatred to Fascism and all its works, to appear in the city concerned—usually Paris or Brussels—and patiently to gain the confidence of such Italian *émigrés* as the spy judges are likely to listen to the "plot."

The day having arrived when he considers it safe to make a proposal, the *agent provocateur* suggests to the exile previously marked down as his prey that the only hope of liberating Italy is to promote individual acts of terrorism which, in his opinion, will assist in undermining the Fascist régime. The *agent provocateur* reveals his plan. He names the man it is necessary to kill, the time and place for the crime is suggested. He has everything ready—forged documents and *visas* for the use of the terrorist in entering Italy (or any other country concerned), money, arms. If the exile walks into the carefully baited trap, he sets out to undertake his desperate deed well provided with all the necessary facilities. And quite ignorant of the fact that at the moment he steps into the train the Italian police, or the Italian Consulate of the country to which he is going, are being notified by the *agent provocateur* of the contemplated crime, the name of the terrorist and full evidence against him.

Upon arriving at the end of his journey, the exile is arrested. Proofs are forthcoming of his intention to attempt the assassination of someone. He has undertaken an act of terrorism for which the penalties, in any country, are severe.

As a rule, the refugee does not deny the charge, and admits frankly that he is a victim of Fascism who regarded it as a duty to continue the fight against that power by the only means at his disposal. His only concern is to accept full responsibility, and deny that other exiles are implicated. Thus the Italian Government obtains further evidence of the activities of *émigrés* abroad, of a nature calculated to alienate the sympathies which foreign nations have extended to the victims of Fascism, evidence on which it can demand the expulsion of refugees from the country concerned.

Had the Fascist *agents provocateurs* played their rôle of devil's advocates more skilfully, that object—the securing of the persons of the anti-Fascist leaders in order to silence their damaging criticism of Fascism and inflict further punishment upon them for persisting in being Liberals, Socialists, Communists and intellectual opponents after the orders which condemned all Italians to be Fascists—might have been achieved. But as will be seen, the *modus operandi* by which this evidence has been secured was too obvious, and in the secret war between Fascism and anti-Fascism, as waged by Mussolini's paid spies, it is the Fascist régime which has suffered defeat.

The methods of the second category of *agents provocateurs* mentioned above require a more skilful type of mind. The *agent* begins by announcing that there is growing dissatisfaction in Italy, and foretelling the speedy overthrow of the Government. Upon these assumptions, he advocates that the circle of exiles into which he has ingratiated himself should form in every province and centre of Italy a group of militant anti-Fascists who can be relied upon to strike a blow for freedom when the signal is given from Paris or elsewhere. By

this means, the spy hopes to obtain the names and addresses of anti-Fascists still living in Italy, with such evidence as may make easy the task of the Special Tribunal in sentencing them. Many of those arrested and deported to Lipari, Ponza and the other isles had their "crimes" brought home to them in this manner before the methods of the *agent provocateur* were as well known as they are to-day.

An example of a Fascist *agent provocateur* who combined both these methods was the notorious Ricciotti Garibaldi, a grandson of the famous architect of Italian liberty.

During the latter part of 1925 and the early months of 1926, the Italian press conducted a systematic campaign against the French Government, the main charge being that the French were favouring anti-Fascist exiles who had sought refuge in that country. On September 11, 1926, an attempt against Mussolini's life was made at Rome by an anarchist named Lucetti, who had returned to Italy from France; a crime which added fresh fuel to the anti-French campaign.

While these events were occurring Ricciotti Garibaldi was in Paris, where he maintained contact with a secret *agent* of the Italian police named La Polla, and the Italian Ambassador, whom he met secretly at a café in the Champs Elysees.

On October 5, 1926, Garibaldi, acting on behalf of the Italian police, from whom he was afterwards proved to have received large sums of money for "services rendered," arranged a meeting in Paris with three Italian anarchists, to whom he suggested that they should go to Rome and assassinate the *Duce*.

The details of the plans proposed were to be worked out in advance, and carried out by another anarchist, named Scivoli, who was to journey to Rome ahead of the conspirators and arrange safe accommodation for them. For this purpose, Garibaldi requested that Scivoli should carry with him letters addressed to Torrigiani, the Grand Master of Italian Freemasons, and to two Republican Members of Parliament. Thus several of those whom Fascism wished to discredit would be implicated in the "plot" when the moment came for the Italian police to take action.

Having laid his plans, Garibaldi asked Scivoli for his passport, under the pretext of having it renewed. Actually, he handed it over to La Polla, the Italian police agent, who made copies of Scivoli's photograph so that the Fascist authorities would know their man when he crossed the frontier.

It was a nicely staged plot. Had the four anarchists left for Rome, they would have been arrested at the frontier. The letters entrusted to Scivoli at Garibaldi's request would have compromised both Freemasons and Republicans. Further, Scivoli and his fellow-conspirators belonged to the same anti-Facist organisations as Lucetti, thus enabling a connection to be established between the recent attempt upon Mussolini's life and the new plot.

All might have gone well with this Italian schemer but for two

factors over which he had no control. The first was the making, on October 31, 1926, when the "plot" was about to be launched, of an unexpected but genuine attempt upon Mussolini's life, for which a sixteen-year-old boy named Zamboni was declared to be responsible. In this attempted crime the Fascist press saw the hand of the anti-Fascists in France, and a wave of antagonism to France swept over Italy, resulting in French consulates being attacked, and French railwaymen assaulted on the frontier.

Perhaps the charge openly made against France of harbouring criminal conspirators against the Fascist régime caused the French authorities, well-versed in the methods of international intrigue, to investigate events more closely than they would otherwise have done. Whether this is so or not, the *dénouement* of the great anarchist "plot" engineered by Garibaldi came suddenly on November 3, before the anarchists had left France. On that day the French police arrested, not the "criminals," but Ricciotti Garibaldi himself, who confessed the part he had played in the whole plot.

"The French police," states Gaetano Salvemini, "could show not only that the French police had not been inactive, but that plots organised in France were the work of Italian *agents provocateurs* and of high officials of the Italian police, travelling under false passports issued directly by the Mussolini Government."¹

To avoid diplomatic reactions, the French Government limited the charges against Garibaldi to two—being in possession of arms and participation while on French soil in a Catalan plot then being attempted against the Spanish Government, in which the Italian *agent provocateur* had taken too close an interest. Actually, the possession of arms was of no importance, while any real participation in the Spanish plot was improbable, for Ricciotti Garibaldi was simply a paid spy. But these charges sufficed. He was expelled from France after having received a nominal sentence from the French Court. England next expelled him. He then crossed the Atlantic to Cuba, but he was chased away from there. He is now back in Italy.

Faced with the damning evidence of this trial, which revealed how badly someone had blundered, the attacks upon France in the Italian press ceased, and the *Duce* wrote three official letters of apology to the French Government for the three attacks upon French consulates in Italy which had occurred following the Zamboni attempt upon his life.

Not content with this official condemnation of acts instigated by the Fascist press, Signor Mussolini issued an instruction to his Prefects, dated January 5, 1927, in the course of which he declared :

"Above all, whatever happens, or happens to me, the Prefects must use every means, I say every means, to prevent the smallest

¹ *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 302.

sign of demonstration against the residences of foreign representatives. Relations between people and people are so delicate and may lead to such developments that it is utterly intolerable for them to be at the mercy of irresponsible demonstrators or of *agents provocateurs* seeking to provoke some irreparable mischief. Any Prefect failing to act in this spirit will be regarded as a cowardly slave or a traitor to the Fascist régime, and will be punished as such."

This instruction was followed by a moderation of the Fascist official attitude towards France, but it did not prevent an Italian named Canovi, pretending to be an opponent of Fascism, journeying to Paris a few weeks later and proposing to refugees that a fresh attempt upon the life of Mussolini should be made. According to one report, this *agent provocateur* was in league with the editor of the Fascist journal *Il Pensiero Latino* of Nice.¹ The only result of this fresh "plot," probably ill-timed, was the expulsion of both men from France by the authorities. Canovi was afterwards sent to Ustica, where he "discovered" the details of a "mass escape" plot, in October, 1927, as related elsewhere.² For this "service" to Fascism he was liberated.

The organisation of *agents provocateurs* in France is sub-divided into three groups. First comes the group which operates under direct orders of the Italian Embassy in Paris. This *élite* among *agents* fulfils a political and police function abroad—they exist to spy upon the activities of the subordinate spies of the other two groups. The second group is composed of *agents* not in permanent Fascist pay. These are spies pure and simple, whose function is to move in emigrant circles, to collect needed information, but otherwise to maintain a passive rôle. The third group is under direct orders of the Fascist Government at Rome, and fulfils the most delicate and dangerous rôle of all.

The members of this third group vary according to the work to be done. They are men of great experience and subtlety, who cover their real occupation by work in all walks of life. And they are most dangerous because the least easily identifiable. This is also the group which has most money at its disposal, and which often plays the double rôle of military spies in addition to being *agents provocateurs*, masking their espionage under pseudo-political work.

Here it may be mentioned that a favoured place for recruiting volunteers for the first two groups is Monte Carlo. Italians who lose heavily at the gaming tables have more than one had their losses turned into gains by accepting suggestions made to them to become spies of the Italian authorities.

The methods adopted by this secret army of Fascist agents vary from the most insidious "sympathy" with anti-Fascism to activities

¹ *The Fascist Dictatorship*, p. 304.

² See Chapter XVI.

which are frankly humorous. They may best be illustrated by some actual instances of the *agent provocateur* at work.

For some months an Italian "book-lover" from Milan never came to Paris without calling upon the aged Filippo Turati (the Socialist leader whom Carlo Rosselli assisted to escape). The book-lover's declared reason for his visits was friendly solicitude for Turati's health. His real reason was to maintain a watch upon the activities of the exiled leader.

One day he visited Alberto Giannini, editor of the anti-Fascist *Il Becco Giallo* in Paris, and the journalist, hearing that he proposed to call again upon "his friend Turati," said :

"I know you are a spy. Turati also knows it—you'd better be off quickly."

The other protested his good faith vigorously, but he has not been seen since in Paris, either by exiles or book-lovers.

Nitti, the ex-Premier of Italy, is also closely watched by *agents*, for it is very important for the Fascist Government to know the state of health of its enemies, and to glean some news of their activities and state of mind.

And here humour comes in. For these spies are mostly inoffensive and so anxious to gain the confidence of the exiles that they are sometimes useful. Many of them are disguised as commercial travellers from Italy, and to gain confidence they offer their wares cheap, so that the keen-witted exile can, if he chooses, secure provisions from them at low prices—macaroni, cheese, ham, etc. Cases are even on record in which the spy has not even waited for payment ! They will also offer the exile rooms at a lower rent, doctors without payment—even lend them money if necessary. Anything to so arrange their lives that they may be kept under close observation. Thus the exile not averse to a little blarney can eke out his often small income by a form of subsidy from the Italian Government.

An *agent provocateur* named Di Gaeta called upon Giannini, and produced a letter of recommendation from a leading Freemason in Italy. (The reader should remember that the Fascist Government had previously dissolved the Masonic order in Italy, seized all papers, official stationery and seals, and sent the Worshipful Master of the Masons into exile at Lipari.)

Di Gaeta informed Giannini that he had two inventions which he wished to exploit in France—one a tuberculosis cure and the second a treatment for a certain disease in horses. He added that he had come to Paris to sell the second invention to the French War Office. This Di Gaeta was a man of imposing personality, very sympathetic, well-informed and kindly. At this first meeting Giannini had no suspicions concerning his *bona fides* and it was natural that, with his Masonic introductions, the stranger should be able to get certain introductions to military circles in France.



M. M. M.

ERMANN MENAPACE

Photo

In Paris at this time lived an old Italian Professor of Mathematics—a former deputy of the Italian Chamber who was in politics a moderate Communist. This professor was known to have the gambling instinct, and to occasionally visit Monte Carlo for the purpose of playing *roulette*.

Di Gaeta, having met him, offered to finance him if he cared to "try his luck" at the gaming tables again, and himself accompanied the old man to Monte Carlo. A fortnight later Di Gaeta returned to Paris, and one day later the professor was arrested by the Monte Carlo authorities and accused of organising a plot against the Fascist Government.

That Government promptly demanded that the culprit should be handed over for trial, but the police of Monaco made further enquiries before replying to this request. As a result, the mathematician was immediately released, the authorities declaring that there was someone else—unknown—behind the affair.

Nothing daunted, Di Gaeta continued to make periodic journeys to Monte Carlo, thus establishing his *alibi*, and showing the exiles in whose ranks he moved that his only interest in the famous southern resort was the thrill of the gaming tables. Giannini, however, was acquainted with the professor, although a political opponent, and certain facts which came to light in connection with the Monte Carlo adventure aroused his suspicions. From that moment the Fascist spy was himself spied upon.

The next move made by Di Gaeta was to introduce to Giannini a man named Clemente Rossetti, whom he stated was a former major of cavalry in the Italian Army; now a commercial traveller and militant anti-Fascist, and one who deserved all support and who would respect every confidence.

Rossetti persevered with the acquaintanceship thus formed. He visited Giannini from time to time and frequently enquired about the exile's wife and children, who were in Italy and refused permission to join him.

"Every time Rossetti talked with me about my wife and children he burst into tears," states Giannini. "How he managed it I do not know, but his tears were as heavy as the large drops of rain which precede a thunderstorm."¹

Having shown his interest in their plight, Rossetti put his cards on the table. He offered to go himself to Rome and to bring Giannini's wife and children back to Paris. To arrange their escape, he said, he would need the names and addresses of two close friends of Giannini still living at Rome, and some secret sign by which they would know that he was coming from Giannini himself. The intention was to utilise this knowledge to gain the confidence of Giannini's friends remaining in Italy, and through them, in turn, to secure the

¹ Alberto Giannini in *VU* (Paris).

names and addresses of other opponents of the Fascist régime. Unfortunately for this *agent*, Giannini was not ignorant of the Fascist laws, under which anyone who attempts to cross the frontier without permission is liable to a heavy prison sentence. He also suspected Rossetti, but genuine or not, he had no intention of exposing his wife and family to such a risk. (Although the "plot" miscarried, Signora Giannini was later arrested, and was retained under police surveillance until she died, as stated in a previous chapter.)

Di Gaeta now reappeared on the scene to offer Giannini a new invention of his fertile brain—this time a bomb, very convenient for wrecking trains. He sought from Giannini advice on how best to utilise this new achievement, suggesting that perhaps they could, together, organise means of transporting some of the bombs into Italy with the help of anti-Fascists known to Giannini, who is himself, as editor of one of the two famous anti-Fascist journals printed in France, a prominent figure in anti-Fascist circles.

Di Gaeta's own suggestion was that Clemente Rossetti, as a commercial traveller returning to Rome, should take this bomb and the formula for making more, with him, together with letters of recommendation from Turati, Nitti and Giannini himself to the anti-Fascists of Italy, so that a revolutionary movement might be promoted. Giannini refused entirely to entertain any such suggestion, and Di Gaeta retired discomfited.

What the next move in this comedy might have been will never be known, for a few days later the French police discovered, at Lyons, evidence of military espionage on a wide scale and arrested four spies, among them Clemente Rossetti. Following investigations of this affair, enquiries were made as to the whereabouts of Di Gaeta, but he had disappeared. His home at Maison Laffitte was empty, and he has not been seen since, either by the French police or the anti-Fascists whom he professed to hold in such high regard.

Some of *Fascismo's agents provocateurs* aim their activities at seeking to split the refugee movement in France, and to promote dissatisfaction with its leaders. Of this type were two Italians named Serracchioli and Savorelli.

These two spies, under their pose of being victims of Fascism, published a manifesto in which the accredited leader of the anti-Fascist movement was blamed for the non-success of attempts to restore liberty to Italy, and in which they demanded that the Italian colony in France should choose new leaders. Circumspectly, and with less flourish of trumpets, they offered five hundred francs to each anti-Fascist who would sign the manifesto, and promised further material aid in future—a great temptation when it is remembered that many of these refugees have lost home, profession, family, savings, and are on the borderline of destitution.

Savorelli was not sufficiently careful, however, and incautiously mentioned to one or two persons that he was drawing financial support

from a group of Fascists living in Italy, whose names he could not reveal. News of this indiscretion reaching Giannini, he published the manifesto in *Il Becco Giallo*, and declared that both Savorelli and Serracchioli were acting under orders from Rome.

This clumsy plot never had any hope of succeeding. Later, the house of Serracchioli was the scene of a swift spy drama of the Edgar Wallace order, when an anti-Fascist named Paven, who had been driven by hunger to spying for these two *agents*, and who had repented his treason, avenged himself by killing Savorelli, a crime for which the assassin was condemned by the Paris Assize Court to ten years' imprisonment. During the course of this trial, the real position of these two bogus "anti-Fascists," which had been obvious from the beginning of their activities, was abundantly proven, and Giannini's surmise linking their attempts to promote a split in the ranks of the exiles with Rome was shown to have been correct.

Giobbe Giopp, a young engineer, twenty-eight years of age, living at Milan, was the victim of another exploit of the ubiquitous *agents provocateurs*. In March, 1928, an individual introduced himself to Giopp, saying that he was an ex-cavalry officer, working as a commercial traveller, by conviction a strong anti-Fascist (as was Giopp himself) and known to certain Italian exiles living in Paris. His detailed and intimate conversation concerning these exiles won Giopp's confidence. Whereupon the stranger announced that a French chemist had discovered an incendiary substance which burst into flames upon being thrown into water, and suggested that the young engineer should make use of this discovery in the fight against Fascism.

When questioning revealed that the substance concerned was metallic potassium, Giopp burst out laughing, and pointed out that metallic potassium was the most harmless substance in the world when exposed to air. Whereupon the visitor seemed annoyed and went away.

A few mornings later Giopp was arrested in the street when on the way to his office, bound, and taken to the police station. At the same time his mother was arrested, apparently in the hope that to save her suffering, her son would reveal the details of his anti-Fascist activities.

The interrogation revealed that the most serious charge against him was that an unknown man, coming from Paris, had been arrested on the Italian frontier while in possession of a bottle containing potassium pellets in paraffin which he intended to deliver to the engineer. Giopp still had no suspicion that his visitor of a few days before was an *agent provocateur*, he thought him a rather simple person who was evidently being shadowed by a spy. He therefore refused to make any statement which might incriminate the man, and contented himself with pointing out that if the police would consult any chemist they would learn that potassium as an incendiary substance was harmless.

Shortly after the preliminary interrogation, however, a new and

more formidable accusation was levelled against the "suspect." On April 12, 1928—twenty-two days after his arrest—an International Fair was opened at Milan and the King of Italy was present at the opening ceremony. A few minutes before his arrival a bomb exploded in the crowd near the entrance, killing twenty-two persons, including women and children. This crime the authorities proceeded to claim was the work of Giopp and certain accomplices.

The methods by which they sought to wring a confession of guilt from the prisoner were instructive. At the beginning of May three gentlemen who declared themselves to be police inspectors interviewed Giopp, and informed him that he would be shot unless he revealed the names of his accomplices. They then opened a folder on which was written "*Ufficio Stampa del Capo del Governo*" (Government Press Bureau) and showed him three daily papers, the *Giornale d'Italia*, the *Corriere della Sera* and *Ambrosiana*, each with large headings stating that the authors of the bomb outrage had been discovered to be the engineer Giobbe Giopp in collaboration with two exiles living in France. The inspectors informed Giopp that his two "accomplices" had been arrested. The engineer vigorously denied this new charge and demanded to be confronted with his accomplices, but they were never produced. Nor was he ever brought before any judge and permitted to refute the charge.

Further, he discovered later that the newspapers which the police showed him were fakes; no Italian paper ever published a single line connecting his name with the crime. What had happened was that the *agent provocateur* who had called upon him had been introduced to his friends in Paris by another spy. Both these men had disappeared suddenly towards the end of 1928. The trap concerning the metallic potassium having failed, the police arrested Giopp according to plan. And Giopp, being thus in prison as a "terrorist" when the Milan bomb outrage occurred, the police endeavoured to burden him with the responsibility for that crime.

Following the formulation of this new charge against him, Giopp was taken from Milan to Rome in chains, and there spent two months in prison, confined in a small and dark cell, with the threat of execution hanging over him. One day they brought his mother, who was still imprisoned, to see her son, hoping that one or the other would betray themselves. But the only thing his mother said, upon seeing her son again, was: "My poor boy, you are still wearing the same shirt that you had on when you were arrested."

Later, they put into Giopp's cell a police inspector masquerading as a "Communist" prisoner. The "Communist" was permitted food and even wine from outside, and offered to share it with Giopp. But when, after three days, neither food nor wine caused Giopp to talk, the "Communist" was removed and not seen again.

After two months occupied with these repeated attempts to secure "evidence" which would enable the Milan crime to be fastened upon

the engineer, the authorities had to admit defeat. There was not a particle of evidence upon which even the Special Tribunal could record a conviction.

Finally, after four months in prison, his mother was released, and Giopp, on July 13, 1928, was presented with a typewritten sheet recording that he had been sentenced to five years' penal detention on the islands as a man "whose activities were a danger to the régime."

From Rome he travelled in chains, in a cellular prison wagon, to the port of embarkation for the island of Ponza, where he remained for two years before the opportunity came to escape.

He made his plans to leave Italy with infinite care. Escape from Ponza was impossible. But he managed to secure permission to return to Milan for the purpose of sitting for some examinations at the university. During the journey, and at Milan, two police agents remained close at his side. They slept in the same room; accompanied him to the university, and every four hours had to report on his movements, including the people he had met or even bowed to in the streets.

On July 16, 1930, he was due to return to Ponza to serve the remaining three years of his sentence. He was ill and weak from the effects of confinement and privation. Before leaving the university for the last time he requested to be permitted to enter the cloakroom. The two police officers stood before the door. They waited for some time, then entered. The room was empty. Giobbe Giopp's plans for eluding his persecutors had succeeded. No one saw him again until his arrival in Paris, where he is now living in exile. That is all it is safe to record concerning the successful escape of one victim of the Fascist *agents provocateurs*.

Two much-discussed cases arising out of the work of these spies were reported in the European press towards the end of 1929.

In October of that year there occurred, at Brussels, the attempt of a young anti-Fascist named Fernand de Rosa to assassinate the Crown Prince of Italy, who was visiting Belgium in connection with his forthcoming marriage to the Princess Marie José. This attempt, which happily failed, planned and carried out by a patriot driven to desperation by the denial of liberty in his native land, profoundly shocked the peoples of Europe—even those who were inclined to sympathise with the motive, and who later gave evidence in favour of de Rosa at his trial, which opened at the Brussels Assize Court on September 25, 1930. For his crime, de Rosa was sentenced to five years' imprisonment—clear evidence that in the view of the Belgian judge there were extenuating circumstances, when it is remembered that the maximum sentence to which the prisoner was liable under Belgian law was hard labour for life.

But if the de Rosa trial was a bad advertisement for Fascism, and conditions existing in Italy, it was responsible for a great increase in

the activity of both the French and Belgian police, and the Fascist *agents provocateurs*, against the Italian exiles.

No doubt feeling that the moment was a favourable one in which to discredit the enemies of Fascism abroad, a month after de Rosa's attempt upon the life of the Crown Prince, sensational charges were brought by the Italian Embassy at Paris against prominent exiles.

These charges concerned a whole string of plots which, if true, meant nothing less than a world campaign of terrorism. A bomb was to be thrown on January 13 at Geneva against Signor Grandi, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, while he was attending the meeting of the League of Nations. An attempt was to be made to assassinate Signor Rocco, Fascist Minister of Justice, when that minister visited Brussels to deliver a lecture on December 27. Other features of the drama, according to the "information" supplied by the Italian authorities, included a request sent to Italian anarchists in the United States to send machine-guns to the conspirators, and the expected arrival of an Italian gunman from Chicago, who had been offered two thousand dollars for throwing the bomb at Signor Grandi at Geneva. Other outrages had been planned in London, the Argentine Republic, India and even New Zealand.

Faced with such sweeping charges, backed by the evidence of letters and other documents, the French police acted swiftly. On December 30, they searched the houses of three Italian anti-Fascists who lived in Paris, found a quantity of explosives, and arrested three of the most prominent foes of the Fascist régime. These three men were : Alberto Tarchiani, Alberto Cianca and Guiseppe Sardelli.

Alberto Tarchiani had been, until December, 1925, secretary to the editorial department of the famous Italian newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera* ; that post he had relinquished when the Fascists compelled Senator Albertini to resign the editorship ; Tarchiani then migrated to France. Cianca had been editor of *Il Mondo* and had stood loyally by Amendola until the latter's death in April, 1926, in circumstances already described. *Il Mondo* was suppressed in November, 1926, and Cianca, realising that internment on the islands would be his lot if he stayed, fled to France. Sardelli, the third "conspirator," had been a Socialist deputy, the member of a party which had never advocated terrorist activities, and had sought refuge in Paris for the same reason as Cianca.

These were the three men whom the public were asked to believe had participated actively in the preparation of the series of terrorist plots reported in the newspapers. Some expressed disbelief from the moment when the news of these plots became known. Thus the Geneva correspondent of the *New York Times*, January 4, 1930, pointed out that "some circles here remain rather sceptical about the plot, doubting that men of the character of some of those arrested would be engaged in terrorism, especially in a plot to throw a bomb into the Council Hall of the League of Nations, endangering more

distinguished non-Italians than Fascists. They are inclined to think the Fascists are using the alleged plot as a means of discrediting some anti-Fascist leaders."

The first "shot" in the campaign had come with the arrest, at Brussels, of an Italian intellectual anarchist named Camillo Berneri, an ex-Professor of Philosophy, who was detained on December 20 on suspicion of planning the attempt to kill Signor Rocco. Upon being searched after arrest, Berneri was found to be in possession of a false passport, and to be armed with a revolver fitted with a silencer—which was later discovered, however, to be practically useless.

Following swiftly upon the heels of Berneri's arrest came the detention of the three anti-Fascists at Paris. The Italian Embassy, when placing the evidence of these plots in the hands of the French authorities, supplied photographs of some letters written to the accused by Berneri, in one of which, addressed to Cianca, the ex-Professor had requested him to keep the "baby" in a dry and cold place.

This was the letter which led to careful searches being made at the homes of the accused, and at Cianca's house "huge bundles of cryptic letters and explosives sufficient for several powerful bombs were seized by the police."

All three men were accused of storing explosives in their homes, contrary to the law of France. What the police actually found—and concerning this there is no dispute—was a small packet of Cheddite, half a dozen detonators and a few feet of Bickford fuse, all materials from which bombs might have been manufactured.

At this point there entered into this sensational story the sinister figure of Ermanno Menapace, an ex-officer of the Italian engineers, to whom must be awarded the doubtful honour of being the greatest *agent provocateur* of his day.

Enquiries set on foot by the *Soir*, a Brussels newspaper, and by the Paris *Volonté*, and subsequently confirmed by a declaration made by Berneri, the arrested Professor, to the Belgian police, brought to light a startling sequence of facts which shed a new and lurid light on the episode.

It was proved that Berneri, during the months of November and December, had lived with Menapace at Versailles. To Menapace he had entrusted the posting of letters they had often written together. Menapace had photographed these letters before posting them, and supplied this "evidence" to the Italian Embassy at Paris.

Menapace had accompanied Berneri on a motor trip to the South of France and Switzerland—an expedition which enabled the Fascist *agents* to declare, subsequently, that a plot was being hatched between Paris and Switzerland against the Italian delegation at Geneva.

Later, Menapace asked Berneri to procure for him some explosive and arms which might be smuggled into Italy—a request not difficult to carry out in France, where no permits are necessary when buying munitions, but only when wearing or exporting arms. Berneri did

not agree to this request. One day shortly after—so ran Berneri's statement—Menapace returned to the house greatly agitated, and informed Berneri that he had received a warning that the French police were going to search their quarters. And Menapace then revealed that he had, without informing his friend, concealed in their rooms a small packet of explosive.

If this were discovered by the police, it would mean serious trouble for both of them, and Menapace therefore urged Berneri to arrange speedily with some compatriot not under suspicion to take charge of the parcel for a few days until the danger was over.

"He suggested the name of Alberto Cianca, who as a Liberal and moderate, was beyond suspicion," declared Berneri. "At first I was opposed to the idea of thus placing a friend in danger, but Menapace succeeded in convincing me that this was the only way left for us both to avoid discovery and arrest.

"Together we went by car to Cianca, and I asked him to take charge of this packet for a few days. Cianca, after a short dispute, agreed, but only on condition that I should remove it in a few days.

"The next morning Menapace urged me to write a short note to Cianca, pointing out that it was necessary to keep the Cheddite in a dry place. Together we drafted a letter in the simple code used for communicating between exiles, in which we recommended him to keep the 'baby' away from draughts and damp places in view of its delicate constitution."

Menapace went out to post this communication, but he posted it, not to Cianca, but to the Italian Embassy.

Having secured the "evidence" he needed, Menapace left Paris for Geneva, taking Berneri with him—a "blind" which enabled the Italian Embassy to put "two and two together," and strengthened the "evidence" of a plot against the Italian delegation at the League of Nations.

Very soon both Menapace and Berneri were back in Paris. Menapace's next move was to urge Berneri to go to Brussels, which city Signor Rocco, Fascist Minister of Justice, was shortly to visit. Having secured the consent of the very pliable Berneri, Menapace supplied him with the revolver found upon him after his arrest, and a photograph of Rocco.

On December 14, Menapace and Berneri left for Brussels by car. And in that city the Belgian police arrested Berneri on December 20, at ten o'clock in the morning, charging him with plotting against the life of Signor Rocco, Italian Minister of Justice. On the same day Menapace's mistress received at daybreak, at Versailles, a telegram from her lover in Brussels which caused her to pack her trunks in haste and catch the train for Basle at midday. Before ten o'clock—the hour of Berneri's arrest—she had left Versailles, taking with her all Menapace's clothes and papers. It is clear, therefore, that Menapace knew that Berneri would be arrested before the event.



ALBERTO CIANCA, ALBERTO TARCHIANI, AND GIUSEPPE SARDELLI

Three prominent Italian exiles arrested in France in connection with an international "plot," afterwards proved to have been instigated by Menapace, a Fascist agent provocateur.

The following day, when Berneri was in a Belgian prison and Menapace was already *en route* for Italy, the Italian Ambassador in Paris handed evidence of the plots to the French authorities. A further request was made for the extradition of all Italian political refugees from Belgium, on the ground that a plot existed to assassinate the Belgian Royal Family in which Berneri was implicated.

These charges, and the allegations concerning a plot against the Italian representatives at the League of Nations, were the subject of careful enquiries by the police of three nations—France, Switzerland and Belgium.

The investigations of these Governments produced fresh evidence of a new and informative nature concerning the great plot or, rather, collection of plots.

Thus on January 11, the Swiss Telegraph Agency issued the following information :

“ The information published by several papers according to which it has been established that the anti-Fascists compromised in a plot against the Italian delegation to the League of Nations had offered a professional gunman of Chicago the sum of £400 to throw a bomb is, according to authorised circles, completely invented.”

On January 17, 1930, further conclusions reached by the Swiss authorities were made known in an official *communiqué* which stated :

“ All the investigations made by the police at Geneva, together with the enquiries made in Paris and Brussels, have failed to prove that any explosives have been introduced from abroad into Geneva, or that they have been kept there with criminal intent. The investigations have failed to prove in any way that individuals arrested in Paris and in Brussels had any connection with persons resident in Switzerland for the purpose of preparing and putting into execution an attempt against the Italian delegation to the League of Nations, or against the train of the Belgian Royal Family. On the contrary, it has been established that a certain Menapace, a person of dubious character, who was connected with Berneri, went to Geneva with his mistress. There are no motives to warrant expulsion.”

The view of the Belgian judicial authorities was contained in the indictment prepared by the Public Prosecutor against Berneri and Menapace. According to the *Soir* of Brussels, the Public Prosecutor, in a speech made during the trial of Berneri, declared that they were face to face with a disturbing case, which had caused a considerable sensation. And he made it perfectly clear that, in his opinion, it was Menapace who was the instigator of the whole affair.

“ Though both men were charged with the same offence, their actions could not be measured alike. Menapace's conduct appeared in a specially odious light, and his betrayal of his compatriot was

too disgraceful for words. He therefore asked the Court for the maximum sentence for Menapace (who was safe in Italy) and for a milder sentence for Berneri."

The moral of the episode was underlined by M. Janson, Minister of Justice, in a speech made in the Belgian Chamber on January 21, 1930. Declaring that, "according to the information held by the Belgian authorities," Berneri had been brought to Brussels by Menapace, he added :

"Belgium cannot admit proceedings of this nature. The danger of agents of this kind, and we cannot ignore it, transported by their zeal and anxious to justify the faith which has been placed in them, is that they act as certain spies during the war, who, in order to be able to expose something, created the very thing they had to expose. Now, no country on earth could admit on its territory the intervention of police agents who come mysteriously to accomplish operations which no one can tolerate."

As for Berneri, the Minister announced that he was accused only of carrying a pistol and of using a false passport. Nothing was said concerning his dynamiting attempts against the League of Nations, against Signor Rocco, against the Belgian Royal Family.

The Court sentenced Berneri to five months' imprisonment, and Menapace, tried in his absence, to seven months.

Referring to the revelations concerning Menapace made during the trial, the *Manchester Guardian* stated : "The activities of this man are sordid in a manner which is almost inconceivable in the modern world, and yet they are the almost natural products of any régime which denies liberty."

Thus the great anti-Fascist "plot" against the Italian delegation at the League of Nations was transformed into a Fascist plot, organised by Menapace and other *agents provocateurs* against prominent Italians living in exile. Seldom, surely, has any spy launched such a boomerang as that which ended in Menapace being convicted by the Belgian Court.

In France Tarchiani and Sardelli were set free immediately the police had completed their investigations. Cianca was sentenced by the Paris Correctional Court to three months' imprisonment, with the benefit of the First Offenders Act and a fine of 200 francs, for being in illegal possession of explosives, Berneri to six months and Menapace to two years.

It is now possible to shed further light on the activities of the ubiquitous Menapace prior to his Paris *coup*.

This prince of *agents provocateurs* was originally introduced to Giannini, editor of *Il Becco Giallo*, when the latter was working as a cashier at a small Franco-Italian restaurant in that city, shortly after his clandestine flight from Rome.

Giannini forgot the encounter, and had begun his work of printing forbidden news for circulation in Italy when one day Menapace came to him at his office, and made, quite spontaneously, a profession of faith in liberty and the anti-Fascist cause.

"I am one of those who like to work in silence," he declared. "I ask neither money nor fame. My object is to make my contribution to the common cause. Fascism is shameful. Mussolini a criminal. The Italian people the victims of a monstrous tyranny. And I, a lover of liberty, cannot bear to remain impassive in the presence of such a situation. I have therefore come to you to offer you my services."

Shortly after this interview, Menapace brought to Giannini a *dossier* of letters written by Savorelli to another *agent provocateur* in Belgium—letters which proved that there existed two distinct groups of Italian spies working independently of each other. At the head of one group was an "antiquary" named Zucca. The leader of the second group was Serracchioli.

Giannini examined these documents carefully, and found them perfectly authentic. Having consulted other prominent anti-Fascists, he delivered the *dossier* to the police, urging them to expel from France this dangerous group of *agents provocateurs*, but unfortunately no steps were taken to that end.

The motives which prompted Menapace to thus denounce his confederates in Fascist pay are difficult to judge. It may have been a carefully designed move to gain the complete confidence of Giannini and other anti-Fascists. Or to rid the corps of *agents provocateurs* of men whose usefulness was at an end. Or, again, Menapace may have been acting on instructions from Rome.

"I continued to have contact with Menapace," states Giannini, with reference to events which followed, "but I never got to the point where I could form an exact opinion of him."

Later Menapace invited Giannini to join with him in taking an active part in the revolutionary movement among the population of the Italian Tyrol, who had become Italian citizens under the terms of the war settlement with Austria. He declared on this occasion that he was a member of the "Central Committee of Action," having its headquarters at Innsbruck, and, with a great display of revolutionary fervour, he talked to Giannini about secret dumps of arms and munitions already stored at the main strategic points, of men ready to march at the first call, and of millions of francs put at his disposal by a secret committee which included influential members of the German Left Parties. This was the "Central Committee of Action" referred to.

He urged Giannini to put himself into direct contact with this committee, and pressed him to go personally to Innsbruck on this mission. He was also most anxious that Giannini should secure the support of Nitti, ex-Premier of Italy, and Luigi Sturzo, the famous leader of

the Catholic Popular Party which had numbered 100 deputies in the Italian Parliament, for the movement.

When Giannini raised certain objections to this proposal, Menapace refuted them with considerable skill. Giannini by this time had received information from friends in Italy that an attempt might be made to entice him across the Italian frontier, so that the Special Tribunal could deal with him as a traitor, as had happened to Cesare Rossi, as related elsewhere.¹ This information pointed clearly to Menapace being an *agent provocateur*, and the "revolutionary plot" in the Italian Tyrol a mare's-nest.

For this reason Giannini resolved not to go to Austria, but he put Menapace into contact with Berneri, a young professor who was at that time assisting him in the production of his paper *Il Becco Giallo*, at Paris, while at the same time investigating the activities of Fascist agents in France.

Giannini pointed out to Berneri that Menapace was evidently a spy of some importance and urged that it was vital that they should not lose sight of him. He therefore proposed that Berneri should go to the meeting at Innsbruck as his representative, to discover some facts about the "committee," and to watch Menapace for further evidence of his real designs.

To Menapace he stated that Berneri would be reporting to him the results of the conference, and if it proved that the plot was sufficiently important, he would do his best to interest prominent Italian ex-Ministers in this struggle of the inhabitants of the Adige valley for freedom.

Menapace showed some displeasure at this arrangement, but he eventually accepted it. And thus began the acquaintance between Menapace and Berneri which was to have unhappy results for the professor.

"To my great astonishment," states Giannini, "Menapace and Berneri never went. I asked Berneri the reason, and he replied that Menapace was on the track of an important spy organisation in Belgium, and that owing to his frequent journeys he could not be bothered for the moment with the Innsbruck affair. It was evident that Menapace, seeing his attempt side-tracked through my unwillingness to go to Austria, was preparing a strategic retreat. He had wished to set in motion a startling plot which would compromise men of the first importance, so that, among other things, these men could be accused of receiving money from abroad. In spite of the evidence of these facts, and the logic of our deductions, I perceived that Berneri's opinion of Menapace was beginning to be modified. One day he went so far as to tell me that he no longer considered him an *agent provocateur*."²

Why did the Italian Government expose itself to such grave risks by thus promoting, through its own agents, this wave of make-believe

¹ See Chapter XIII.

² Statement in *VU*, February 26, 1930.

plots? It is possible that the answer to the riddle may be found in the rumoured wish of Princess Marie José of Belgium, upon her marriage to Prince Humbert of Italy, that an amnesty should be granted to political prisoners in Italy. This request, if actually made, would have placed Signor Mussolini in a position of peculiar difficulty. Interest and prudence dictated a refusal, but a refusal without any explanation might have seemed discourteous to the Royal bride. Hence the activity of the Fascist *agents provocateurs* designed to provide the necessary "plots" at the right moment, compromising the anti-Fascist leaders, and proving provocation against Rome which made any gesture of mercy impolitic.

While *agents provocateurs* are, at the behest of the Fascist Government, engaged in producing one "plot" after another, with the facility of an experienced conjuror evolving rabbits out of a hat (but without a conjuror's skill!) the *fuorusciti* whom they seek to incriminate have continued to espouse their cause, and to fight and expose Fascism both within Italy and without. And if their weapons of attack do not include violence against the Italian Government or its leading figures, the activities of the Anti-Fascist Concentration in Paris—the G.H.Q. of the exiled Italians, whether Liberals, Catholics, Socialists or Republicans—are nevertheless a thorn in the side of the régime against which they direct their offensive.

These activities take many forms. Prominent anti-Fascists, including Professor Salvemini, ex-Premier Nitti, Signor Giannini, Filippo Turati, the Socialist leader, Count Sforza, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arturo Labriola, Professor of the University of Naples, Silvio Trentin, ex-deputy, Francesco Ferrari, barrister and leader of the Christian Democratic Party, and Professor Rosselli, have kept the world correctly informed concerning events in Italy—events which often the Italian censorship would feign conceal. And they have interpreted, step by step, the fight for liberty which is still being waged by many sons of Italy, and exposed the denial of the fundamental rights of man which has been so pronounced a feature of Signor Mussolini's régime.

The Anti-Fascist Concentration has also exposed the often misleading reports circulated from Italian official quarters, and so enabled the public of other countries to estimate these inspired *communiqués* at their true worth.

More important from the anti-Fascist point of view, they have carried the war of conflicting ideas—democracy *versus* dictatorship—into the enemy camp by circulating among the people of Italy the news which the Fascist newspapers may not print. This they have done by various means—manifestos dropped from the air, clandestine anti-Fascist news-sheets which run the blockade and are distributed throughout Italy, and directly by word of mouth through anti-Fascist *agents* who run the risk of returning to their native land. The story of how a little band of exiled editors, statesmen and academicians

have succeeded in defying all attempts of the Fascist authorities to prevent any criticism of the régime from reaching the Italian population is perhaps the most interesting chapter in this never-ending fight between democracy and dictatorship.

Just as *La Libre Belgique* was printed and distributed for months in Belgium during the German occupation without either printing press or methods of distribution being discovered ; just as the Sinn Feiners succeeded in circulating their news during the days before Michael Collins came to Downing Street to negotiate a Home Rule Treaty for Ireland, so *Il Becco Giallo*, suppressed by the Fascist Government, and *La Liberta* continue to enter Italy month after month despite every effort to keep them out.

How is it done ? For the punishment of possessing a copy of one of these anti-Fascist sheets may be three years' imprisonment, and the eyes of the *Organizzazione Vigilanza Reati anti-Nazionali*, the secret police whose duty it is to suppress " anti-national " crime, are everywhere.

Although for obvious reasons the whole story cannot yet be told, it is possible to lift a corner of the veil.

Il Becco Giallo, formerly a political weekly published in Rome and edited by Giannini, still appears every month from a Paris office where it is produced under the same editorship. And during the past few years the caustic wit which made the paper famous has become more caustic still—at the expense of Fascism and Signor Mussolini.

The anti-Fascist *Il Becco Giallo* is a small four-page journal, printed on thin yellow paper. Every month thousands of copies enter Italy, and never do they enter twice by the same route.

" The circulation of this contraband periodical is authoritatively reported to have passed the 100,000 mark. Thousands of copies reach South America and the United States while tens of thousands leak into Italy through channels which it would be a shame to disclose.

" One prominent Genoese business man informed the writer that he usually receives three copies of the paper—one mailed from France, another from Belgium, and a third from ' somewhere in Italy.' Since it is high treason to be found in possession of the forbidden publication he carefully reads it and then passes the three copies to the Fascist Police (who devour its contents as avidly as the most extreme anti-Fascist). Even Benito Mussolini reads *Il Becco Giallo*, it is said, while the King of Italy finds its barbed thrusts, despite the fact that they pillory His Majesty along with the Dictator, refreshing, it is reported."¹

Usually *Il Becco Giallo* enters Italy disguised as merchandise. To circulate one recent issue, the editors and their friends bought up a

¹ Albin E. Johnson in *Editor & Publisher* (New York), December 28, 1929.

consignment of household soap. The paper wrapping was stripped from the bars and replaced by the forbidden yellow newspaper. 'A week later so many tons of soap crossed the Italian frontier in safety, and for some time after that workmen and their wives buying cheap soap in all parts of Italy unwrapped it in their homes and found on the wrapper, not the usual directions for using the soap, but the facts concerning the lives of the deportees on Lipari and Ponza, and other news which the Italian authorities think it better to suppress.

La Liberta is distributed by similar methods. It is first produced as a four-page newspaper of ordinary size, then reproduced in miniature by a photographic process on rice paper, which can be folded up so thin that 20,000 words can be concealed inside a packet of cigarettes. It is not difficult to imagine a hundred ways of secretly forwarding those flimsy pages of wordy dynamite across the Alps and down to the Italian plains.

Thus every arrest, every trial, every phase of the fight against tyranny is brought to the notice of at least some of those who remain in Italy. And once the forbidden newspapers are circulating, the news is passed on by word of mouth.

Other organisations in Paris and Brussels—in addition to the Anti-Fascist Concentration—keep in touch with those in Italy sympathetic to their aims by the same clandestine methods. When the Italian Ambassador at The Hague instituted enquiries to discover whether it was true that the International Transport Workers Union had succeeded in distributing thousands of manifestos in Italy, and re-established a number of branches there among transport workers despite the law making membership of the Union illegal, M. Edo Fimmem and N. Nathans, the secretaries of the Federation, sent to the Ambassador a letter dated August 5, 1930, in the course of which they stated :

" We are glad to be able to give an unreservedly affirmative reply to the question put to us. We enclose for your information a copy of the manifesto published and distributed by us. We may add that we propose to continue exporting such documents to Italy and that we hope thereby to multiply the successes already achieved by our propaganda.

" For your further information we also enclose copies of our journal in French, German, English, Swedish and Spanish—unfortunately we do not yet issue an Italian edition, but that is merely a question of time. You will be able to gather from this journal the opinion of our International, and the workers affiliated with it, with regard to the accursed régime under which the Italian proletariat groans.

" If at any time your Excellency should desire further information we suggest that you should apply direct to us. We are at all times willing, at your request, to send you a certain number of

copies of our anti-Fascist publications, so that you can distribute them amongst your friends.

"Accept, your Excellency, this expression of our hate for the Fascist régime, and the assurance that we are, in every respect, with the Italian workers in their struggle for freedom."

On November 22, 1930, in the Town Hall at Lugano, Switzerland, the verdicts were announced in the trial of an Italian anti-Fascist named Bassanesi and seven co-defendants, who were charged by the Swiss authorities with having flown from Bellinzona, in Switzerland, over Milan and other cities of Northern Italy on July 11, 1930, for the purpose of dropping anti-Fascist leaflets from the air. This was alleged to be an offence under the Swiss Penal Code, which forbids the violation of foreign territory by persons resident in Switzerland.

Bassanesi, before his judges, openly admitted his guilt, for which he held the brutality of the Fascist régime to be responsible. Among those charged with him, and who had assisted to load up the leaflets, was Professor Carlo Rosselli (whose statement at this trial appears at the head of this chapter) and Tarchiani, formerly on the staff of the *Corriere della Sera*, and these prominent anti-Fascists in their evidence gave a graphic picture of the sufferings of the Italian people under Fascism, and held that their action was justified in view of the ban upon any free speech in their country.

As the trial drew to its close, excitement increased, and it became evident that an adverse verdict would cause trouble in the city.

At four o'clock the verdict was delivered. Bassanesi was sentenced to four months' imprisonment (which, in view of the weeks that he had been under arrest, meant immediate freedom), and the remaining defendants were acquitted.

Later, the Swiss Government issued a formal decree for the expulsion of Bassanesi, Rosselli and Tarchiani (all of whom live normally in Paris) from the country, a decree which was the subject of protest by many Swiss newspapers.

The organisation behind Bassanesi's flight over Italy was a revolutionary anti-Fascist movement named *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty). This clandestine society has in two years of life succeeded in securing wide circulation within Italy of anti-Fascist books, journals and pamphlets, and, in addition to Bassanesi's flight, organised the successful escape of the three anti-Fascists, Francesco Nitti, Carlo Rosselli and Emilio Lussu, from Lipari.

The *Giustizia e Libertà* movement began in 1929, and was the first manifestation of definite action on the part of those democratic anti-Fascists who believe that in the fight against Fascism it is useless to rely upon the King, or foreign nations, or the fall of the *lira*, to sweep away the present dictatorship. The movement is opposed not only to Fascism, but to the whole present régime in Italy. Its programme, printed on the first page of its clandestine leaflets, is as follows :

" *Giustizia e Libertà* struggles for overthrowing the Fascist dictatorship and the victory of a free, democratic and republican régime.

" It accepts a revolutionary rôle because the dictatorship has made any other form of struggle impossible.

" It issues a call to action to all Italians whose dignity has been offended by the present state of servitude and who are prepared to take an active part in the revolt.

" It affirms that in the struggle it is united by bonds of common interest with the workers, for only with the coming of a government that assures juridical equality and political freedom will the working classes be able to realise their ideal of economic and social justice.

" It affirms that the liberation of Italy must be accomplished by Italians.

" And declares that the struggle will be hard and imposes enormous sacrifices on those who answer the call. This is the price of the Second Italian *Risorgimento*."

The movement is not bound by any political party. It is independent and its organisation is, of course, secret. People of all classes and all opinions have joined its ranks, uniting not only to overthrow Fascism and the monarchy, but also to reconstruct a democratic State.

The movement has spread to nearly all the provinces of Italy, its aim being not immediate insurrection, but rather the education of a strong and disciplined democratic minority within the frontiers of Italy, which may be ready when the hour for action comes.

Its propaganda consists mainly of leaflets and secret papers, distributed by the various branches by a multiplicity of subterfuges. The movement maintains within Italy a number of printing establishments, which the Italian authorities, despite great activity, have not succeeded in locating.

During the flight of Bassanesi over Milan, hundreds of thousands of different manifestos were dropped on the city, and despite furious police activity, found their way into barracks, factories, offices and private houses and from hand to hand throughout the country.

These activities have been carried out in the face of every conceivable difficulty. The movement must defend itself against the police, spies, *agents provocateurs* and common informers. Hundreds of people belonging, or suspected of belonging, to *Giustizia e Libertà* have been arrested and sentenced to imprisonment or exile.

Yet, despite these difficulties, the movement has published and circulated over fifty different books, papers and leaflets in Italy during its two years of life.

It was not until October 30, 1930, that the O.V.R.A. (political police) discovered the identity of the ringleaders of this " clandestine organisation for the planning of crimes against the régime, some of

which were to be carried out on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the March on Rome."

Considerable police activity followed. Belotti, former Minister of the Giolitti Government, was arrested and exiled, and twenty-four prominent Italians—all leading figures in the public life of their country and some of them well-known Liberals—were arrested for high treason, among them Professor Ferruccio Parri, a former staff officer in the Italian Army; Riccardo Bauer, Raffaele Cantoni and Ernesto Rossi, Liberals of academic distinction, Umberto Ceva, aged thirty, a young Milanese lawyer, Bernardino Roberto and Faucelle.

The previous careers of the three Liberals who were later to be the most important prisoners at the treason trial were as follows: Riccardo Bauer, aged thirty-four, who threw up his university studies on the outbreak of war, and enlisted in the Italian Army as a volunteer. He was severely wounded twice, mentioned in despatches, twice gained the Military Cross and was awarded the bronze medal for valour. After the War became a teacher of economics at Milan.

Bernardino Roberto, aged forty-five, volunteered for war service and was invalided out of the Italian Army after being severely wounded. Was one of the founders of the National Association of Wounded Ex-Servicemen.

Ernesto Rossi, aged thirty-two, volunteered for active service, was permanently injured and decorated for valour. Later appointed lecturer in economics at the Technical Institute of Bergamo.

The prisoners were lodged in the Regina Cœli prison at Rome and an official *communiqué* dated December 4, announced that they would be tried by the Special Tribunal charged with organising *Giustizia e Libertà*.

These arrests were arranged with the connivance of a Fascist *agent provocateur*, Carlo Del Re, a barrister of Milan. In 1929 this agent of the Italian Government got into touch with anti-Fascists in North Italy, and assisted in the distribution of forbidden anti-Fascist journals in that region. On October 4, 1930, the same man visited Count Sforza, a former Foreign Minister of Italy who is now living in exile at Brussels, bearing a letter of introduction signed with a name calculated to inspire confidence. Del Re suggested to Count Sforza that it was a propitious moment to begin a terrorism campaign against the Fascist Government, but the ex-Minister replied that he could neither advise nor approve any campaign of violence.

Four days later Del Re was in Paris, urging the same plan upon anti-Fascists there. Once again he was met with a blank refusal, whereupon he returned to Milan.

On the anniversary of the "March on Rome" a bomb was exploded in the Fascist centre in Paris by two men, one of whom was known to be in close contact with the Italian police. Following this outrage, the arrests were made in Italy.

On November 2, after the arrests had taken place, Del Re telephoned from Lugano to the anti-Fascist headquarters in Paris saying that it was prudent for him to leave Italy, and that he needed money. He also endeavoured to secure addresses of prominent anti-Fascists still in Italy.

Upon his arrival in Paris Del Re has a strange tale to tell. According to his version of events in Italy following the Paris outrage, he had returned to Italy in order to blow up a police station, but upon his arrival on the scene of action, he discovered that the bomb was faulty. He declared that he desired to return to Italy once more in order to carry out this terrorist act, but that in order to do so he needed funds, and also the names and addresses of anti-Fascists to whom he might apply for help in carrying out his plot.

For answer Del Re was informed bluntly that he was suspected of being a Fascist *agent provocateur*. After many contradictions, which showed him at least to be a fluent liar, he sought refuge from his questioners in a statement that he was too exhausted to answer further questions without rest, and asked that a further conference might be held between himself and prominent anti-Fascists the following day, at which he would produce proofs of his *bona fides*.

But the following morning those he desired to meet awaited for Del Re in vain. Enquiries showed that he had fled from Paris overnight, leaving behind him a letter in which he stated that seeing he was suspected of being a Fascist spy, he proposed to go back to Italy and within two weeks perpetrate an act of terrorism against the Fascist régime which would prove he was not in Fascist pay.

Del Re was known to have returned to Milan. He was not arrested by the Italian Government. Neither was any terrorist action against that Government reported "within two weeks." But indirect confirmation of the part which this *agent provocateur* had attempted to play was provided by the indiscretion of some Fascist official who, in a statement concerning the arrest of the twenty-four professors and others, added the information "these arrests are due to the work of Del Re." In the light of these facts and later information, it is beyond doubt that the contemplated terrorist activities mentioned in the indictment of the twenty-four accused, dated December 3, 1930, were planned by this same *agent provocateur*, using the methods that gained Ricciotti Garibaldi notoriety in 1926; that Di Gaeta used in 1927, and Menapace in 1929.

While the twenty-four accused were awaiting trial, a tragedy occurred at the Regina Cœli prison.

An official statement issued on January 2, 1931, announced that Umberto Ceva had committed suicide in his cell, leaving behind a letter to his wife in which he declared his death to be due to personal motives and asking that no "speculation" concerning the manner of his end should be encouraged by those he left behind.

So ran the official version. Later news which reached friends of

the dead man suggests that Ceva took the extreme step of ending his life rather than make any admission, either to the police or the Special Tribunal, which would incriminate Del Re, and expose the part which this supposed "friend" had played in manufacturing bombs and seeking support for the commission of deeds of violence.

What had happened was that on the day before Ceva was arrested Del Re came to his office and brought him a formula for manufacturing explosives, which Del Re asked him to examine rapidly. Ceva replied that he was busy and that in any case he was not interested in it. Whereupon Del Re left the paper on his table, where it remained until the following morning, when the police swooped down upon the office and upon entering went directly to the table and, finding the paper, arrested Ceva.

To defend himself, Ceva would have had to accuse Del Re. Rather than prove his own innocence by such a betrayal, he took his own life, unaware that the man for whom he sacrificed himself was the *agent provocateur* who had instigated the "conspiracy," and to whose activities the arrests of Ceva and the other accused had been due!

In his last letter to his wife, Dr. Ceva wrote: "I have faith in only three things: my country, my family and liberty, and I cannot live in a country without liberty."

His body was cremated by the authorities; a request made by his widow that the ashes might be given to her for interment at Bobbio, his birthplace, was refused.

The official *communiqué* of December 4, announcing the arrests, stated that all had confessed to being members of the clandestine *Giustizia e Libertà* organisation and plotting the overthrow of the Fascist State. But before the trial opened, one of the prisoners had been handed over to an ordinary military tribunal, one (Ceva) had died, and fourteen had, despite the "confessions," been released owing to lack of evidence. When, therefore, the Special Tribunal assembled on May 30, 1931, to judge those charged with complicity in this anti-Fascist plot, seven men only faced their accusers, the principal defendants being Dr. Bauer and Ernesto Rossi.

The hearing lasted twenty-four hours, and at the conclusion of the trial two of the defendants, one being Professor Zari who had petitioned Signor Mussolini for reprieve while awaiting trial, were acquitted. Dr. Bauer and Ernesto Rossi, who accepted full responsibility for the activities of the "Justice and Liberty" movement, were condemned to twenty years' imprisonment; two further defendants to ten years' imprisonment, and the fifth, "in consideration of his youth," to six. All were deprived for ever of their right to hold any public office and will undergo an additional three years' police supervision upon release.

Asked if he wished to make any statement before sentence was passed, Dr. Bauer replied, "We abide by our political convictions."

"With the exception of Zari, who had wept almost unceasingly

during the trial, the behaviour of the prisoners was strong and manly, and they accepted their heavy sentences with perfect calmness," stated the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent (June 1, 1931).

A trial which opened before the Special Tribunal at Rome on December 22, 1930, revealed the existence within Italy of yet another clandestine political society. The defendants were seven Liberal anti-Fascists, residing in Italy, and they were charged with "conspiring together and with others to attack the Constitutional Order of the State and inciting to rebellion by means of the compilation, duplication or distribution of an anti-Fascist clandestine newspaper entitled *Alleanza Nazionale*," the organ of a "secret organisation" of the same name, the object of which was declared in the indictment to be to "co-ordinate all the anti-Fascist forces."

The *Alleanza Nazionale* consisted of a series of news bulletins—there were eleven in all—of which the first was compiled and issued secretly in Rome in June, 1930, by Dr. Lauro de Bosis with the three-fold purpose: (a) of supplying the Italian people with the minimum of objective news of which they are at present deprived by the censorship; (b) of promoting an alliance of all constitutional parties in order to fight Fascism through all the means granted by the law; and (c) of recovering for the "men of order" the task which would otherwise fall into the hands of the extremists. It was an attempt of the Italian intellectuals opposed to the Fascist régime to focus discontent into constitutional channels. The *Alleanza Nazionale* in its bulletins did not preach violence; in fact it expressly deprecated any violent action. Having studied all the eleven issues I can affirm that the news which it contained is news that would be freely printed in any democratic country. But it was opposed to the régime, and therefore illegal.

For five months Dr. de Bosis continued his task of issuing this news without detection. Six hundred prominent Italians received it regularly. Each recipient was requested to make six copies of each bulletin and pass them on, so that the anti-Fascist case might be known to the people of Italy. Although only six were asked for, many wrote out a hundred copies. The *Alleanza Nazionale* carried the war against the censorship into the enemy's camp to such good purpose that discovery was only a matter of time.

Towards the end of August, 1930, Dr. de Bosis confided the secret of his work to Dr. Mario Vinciguerra, one of Italy's best art and literary critics, and Renzo Rendi, literary correspondent of the *New York Times*, and a prominent journalist, and during a visit which de Bosis made abroad, these two men undertook the task of distributing the circulars.

Dr. de Bosis was on his way back to Italy when the movement was discovered, and his mother, sixty-six years of age, and his two friends arrested, together with four other persons, two of them teachers, one an official in a Government telegraph office and another a married woman, Signora Olga Tentori.

At the trial Dr. de Bosis was not judged in his absence abroad, and Vinciguerra and Rendi faced their accusers with unflinching heroism. It was proved in evidence that their part of the movement had been confined to distributing the bulletins sent to them by de Bosis, and that only once (in the case of Signor Vinciguerra) had they replaced one that did not arrive in time with news of their own composition.¹

The object of the *Alleanza Nazionale* was shown to have been to give a "real picture" of the situation in Italy to-day and the formulation of an understanding between all anti-Fascist parties, excluding the Communists who believe in the method of violence, with the aim of achieving an ultimate "solution of the Italian problem."

"The defending counsel," states a *Times* report (December 23, 1930), "laid emphasis on the non-revolutionary nature of the action proposed by the party and pleaded that the law for the defence of the State under which the accused were charged was intended for application only against parties advocating violence."

All the accused admitted their guilt in opposing Fascism, and Signora de Bosis and some of the minor prisoners pleaded for pardon. The two principal prisoners (apart from Dr. de Bosis, who was not present in person), Vinciguerra and Rendi, made no submission and faced their fate with fortitude. Both were condemned to fifteen years' imprisonment, of which the first two and a half are to be passed in solitary confinement.

Professor Gelmetti, another of the accused, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for merely passing on copies of *Alleanza Nazionale*. The trial of Dr. de Bosis was suspended until such time as he returns to Italy.

Signora de Bosis, the aged mother of Dr. de Bosis, was acquitted, as having acted without guilty intent, and in view of her plea for mercy.

Vinciguerra passed from the court to the prison of Fossombrone, and Rendi was incarcerated in the San Gimignano jail. In Fossombrone Vinciguerra has neither table nor chair. He is confined in a room seven feet square. From 7.30 a.m. onwards through the day he must stand, or sit on the floor. Apart from his daily allowance of forty minutes for exercise, he is quite alone. No one is permitted to speak with him; he is allowed to write one letter a fortnight. Reading is the only remaining solace allowed to this unhappy prisoner of Fascism. Yet his treatment is in no way exceptional: thousands of anti-Fascists condemned to long sentences are enduring similar suffering, hidden from the world behind the prison walls of Fascist Italy.

Following the result of the *Alleanza Nazionale* trial, statements were made, in view of the submissions for leniency put forward by

¹ A literal translation, in English, of all the *Alleanza Nazionale* bulletins has been issued by *Imprimerie Vendome*, 338, Rue Saint-Honore, Paris.

several of the prisoners, that the anti-Fascists had proved themselves a "poor lot." A tribute should, therefore, be paid to the courageous bearing, even when faced with the certain prospect of a long term of imprisonment under conditions all too well known to them, of Vinciguerra and Rendi. Of the former, one who knew him has written: "A mild and gentle scholar in appearance, passionately devoted to the little girl of seven who is now all that is left to him since the death of his wife, Vinciguerra is of the type of quiet but determined Italian who made the *Risorgimento*. Though he is still a monarchist, and therefore divided in opinion from the bulk of the anti-Fascists, he felt it his duty to work against the present régime by joining . . . the *Alleanza Nazionale*, and helping to disseminate its literature . . . the quiet little scholar has stood the same test that was offered to the early Christians, and he at least has burned no incense to Mussolini."¹

Signora de Bosis, an American by birth, did write a letter to *Il Duce*, pleading for pardon, but it is known that the strongest possible pressure was brought to bear upon her to do so. She was old and ill. Her daughter was arrested and imprisoned for a day. Her remaining children were threatened with dismissal from their posts if the mother did not submit. Whether the surrender of this aged lady, under such pressure, proves that the anti-Fascists are "a poor lot" is a question on which there may be two opinions among those who are conversant with conditions in Italy to-day.

"Five of the eight Italian moderates who were accused have made their peace with Signor Mussolini," stated the *Manchester Guardian*. "Three of the prisoners, however, have been sent to prison; two of them, who stood their ground, for the long term of fifteen years. It is idle to deny that these men knew what they were doing. They understood quite well that in Italy to publish opinions which the Government does not like is a serious crime. They counted the cost and decided that the risk was worth running; indeed, that it was their duty to do so. Few Englishmen will condemn them for maintaining the right of free speech, which in this country is properly recognised as the indispensable foundation of our liberties."

"The most surprising feature of the documents which these two men are alleged to have circulated is their mildness. They contain not a single exhortation to violence," declared the *New York World* (December 29, 1930), while the *New York Evening Post* (December 23, 1930), commented upon the trial as follows:

"Now is the glory of *Fascismo* vindicated! Renzo Rendi, an occasional correspondent of this newspaper in Rome, and Mario Vinciguerra, a distinguished art critic, were put on trial in Italy

¹ Janet Trevelyan in *Manchester Guardian*, January 20, 1931.

for promulgating the abstract idea that democratic government is preferable to minority rule based on force. Of them and to them the Fascist judge said: 'You are no conspirators. You are just political worms who tried to poison the minds of others, thinking yourselves entirely safe. Abroad, you pass as conspirators, but you do not deserve that honour.' And so they got fifteen years' penal servitude. There is nothing to be done about it; they are both Italian subjects, and Italians now allow other Italians to be treated in this brutal way. But how strong is Fascism, anyway? How strong is Mussolini? If he needs to be bolstered up by fifteen-year sentences for 'worms,' it looks as if he were just about as much scared of his power as Mr. Al Capone of Chicago."

Two quotations from issues of the *Alleanza Nazionale* bulletins will suffice to explain the danger which this intellectual opposition, for all its moderation, would have become to the Italian Government if unchecked—and no man can say that the sentences passed upon Vinciguerra and Rendi have checked it. Those who know the spirit of those who are fighting for Italian liberty will agree with the comment of the *New York World* that "the dramatic struggle between the Italian Liberals and the Fascist *Ovra* has in all probability not ended, but just begun" (December 30, 1930).

In the fourth bulletin, issued on September 1, 1930, it is stated:

"For a long time the world has recognised in Bolshevism and Fascism two aspects of the same phenomenon; both oppression of an armed minority over an unarmed and passive majority; both resting on the suppression of every critique and on isolation from the rest of the world; both anti-European, anti-historical, anti-cultural and anti-Christian; both conspiring with all the disinherited of Europe, well aware that their game is lost if the world does not adopt their ideas; and at the same time, both belied by the necessity of keeping their citizens by force, as the people long for nothing better than to escape their prisons for the neighbouring countries where they will not be oppressed.

"Fascism is the resultant of two opposite tendencies: now they balance each other, but the slightest push can give to either the upper hand. The two forces are: red syndicalism and bellicose nationalism. The first, after having exploited the lower classes, will inevitably attack the upper ones. The second justifies its existence only by constantly preparing for war. Whoever has a horror of Communism and war cannot fail to recognise in Fascism an immense power-deposit of these two evils, the fuse of which is in the hands of an oligarchy of irresponsible plunderers who, sooner or later, will be forced to risk the very existence of the country in order to save themselves."

In the last issue of the bulletin circulated before the arrests, the author defined the aim of the *Alleanza Nazionale* :

"The *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance) is not a party, but an instrument of action in whose success all parties are equally interested, because for all the primary interest is that of existing. The Alliance, far from having a political programme of its own to impose, wishes merely to create those conditions which are indispensable for the existence of any political life no matter what its character may be. Having limited its task to this preliminary object, it is equally loyal to all parties that compose it and has no interests towards the making of the political life of to-morrow any one colour more than another. Italy once redeemed will have the colour of that group within the Alliance which will have done the most to overthrow Fascism. . . .

"The civil army of the Italians is being organised with mathematical regularity and has received on last October 27, the most solemn of recognitions from Mussolini himself. He, who up to a few months ago used to speak of anti-Fascism as if it were a trifle to be laughed at, is suddenly obliged to admit: 'The Year Nine will make the dilemma more sharp. It is either we or they, our State or theirs.'

"Officers of Italy, who have given your blood for freedom against the Fascists of yesterday, the Hapsburgs, ministers of a religion profaned every day by the official cult of violence, industrialists of a wounded industry, merchants of an assassinated commerce, all of you, workers without faith in the fruit of your work—the Italy of Cavour and Mazzini is again arrayed against the Italy of Radetzky and the Bourbons."

"Italy once redeemed——" Thus the fight to undermine the Fascist régime continues, despite the penal code which turns every criticism into a crime ranking with murder.

It is a one-sided fight. For many of the leading anti-Fascists are in exile and *all* the avowed anti-Fascists are in exile. Many of them are penniless; many have lost everything before leaving Italy and are discouraged. And against the forces of democracy is ranged a powerful dictatorship with all the resources of a leading European power at its disposal.

But the forces of anti-Fascism are sustained by an ideal—the ideal of liberty. They believe that one day liberty will win. And in that sure faith they affirm, with Carlo Rosselli, that "we shall continue the fight as long as we live."

So the war without end is waged.

CHAPTER XIX

FASCISM—THE FUTURE

“No authoritarian State in the modern world has attained a high degree of civilisation nor even a considerable measure of wealth. In the early days of absolutism the evil is not perceived, but decadence is inevitable.”

EX-PREMIER NITTI.

STUDYING the record of Fascist terrorism one is reminded that unlimited power is a poison which destroys the finer qualities. Not even in Soviet Russia has personal liberty suffered a more complete eclipse than it has in Italy under the present régime. The organised violence of Fascism has been such that nothing which could happen in Italy to-day would seem other than the logical sequence of a power founded upon unbridled tyranny.

Whether the contentions of those who maintain that nevertheless Mussolini has done much for Italy be true or not, what no well-informed person will deny is that Italy, through her most sincere and courageous sons, has paid a frightful price for a strident nationalism.

In certain fields there has been progress ; an increased efficiency in the railways, improvement in some of the social services, an intensification of the “anti-tuberculosis” campaign and of the child-welfare movements, and land reclamation on a vaster scale than hitherto. This we may grant. But even these commendable schemes, most of which, as a matter of fact, were in existence before Fascism appeared, have in many cases been stultified, or cut short, by the economic plight into which politically controlled finance has brought the country.

The economic crisis in Italy has been aggravated by the general world-depression, but the Fascist régime must bear a heavy share of responsibility. Political and not economic criteria determined the stabilisation of the *lira* at 92 to the £, when 120 was the figure represented by its purchasing power, and this decision—carried out at Mussolini’s insistence, against the advice of all competent persons—has proved fatal to trade, industry and agriculture. Moreover, the upkeep of the Fascist militia, the vast sums spent on spy-services and kindred activities, are a constant drain on the resources of the country. Taxation, which has increased by a third, amounts to a crushing capital levy, and eating up the margins of capital necessary for economic development, presses no less heavily on the poor.

“Fortunately,” said Mussolini, on December 18, 1930, “the Italian people are not accustomed to eating many times a day, and having a modest standard of life, they will feel want and suffering less.” Bread and sugar, and salt, and coffee are heavily taxed.¹ And as, in spite of exorbitant prices, wages have fallen from 15 to

¹ The tax on bread is 60 cent. a kilo (about 1d. a pound loaf) ; on sugar 5.32 *lira* a kilo (about 7d. a lb.) ; on coffee, 17 *lira* (about 2s. a lb.), and on salt 1.20 *lira* (about 1½d. a lb.).

40 per cent since 1920, the result has been a reduction in the standard of living of an already underfed people, sufficient to counteract any "anti-tuberculosis campaigns."

At the same time unemployment has reached alarming proportions, aggravated by the cruel ban on emigration. Nor do the official figures of between six and eight hundred thousand include the unemployed peasants. Among those who risk their lives in trying to flee across the mountain frontiers are many driven by sheer starvation. So grave was the economic crisis during the winter of 1930-31 that many competent observers believed the knell of the Fascist Government had sounded. If events have proved them wrong, it is because something more than economic hardship is necessary to drive a prevailingly peasant people, inured to want, to take the initiative of active resistance.

"Because the foreign press says nothing about anti-Fascist activities in Italy people are inclined to think the present régime has no foes," stated the *New York World* (July 29, 1929). "But the penal islands are crowded with men who have shown disapproval of the system now prevailing throughout the country. Their number, of course, is very small when compared with the passive inhabitants; for retribution, though silent, is swift and most Latins believe in the waiting game rather than in martyrdom."

The militia, the omnipresent spies, the activities of the O.V.R.A. (the Italian *Cheka*), the fear, only too well grounded, of the *agent provocateur*, and the economic hold of the Fascist Corporations, are sufficient to explain the passivity of the people at large, while among the middle and upper classes many who would be actively anti-Fascist are restrained by fear of the aftermath. For since all the organisations that would canalise revolt into constructive channels have been destroyed—trade unions, cultural associations, political parties—the immediate reaction might well take the form, not of Communism (for Communism and Fascism are too near akin), but of anarchy.

At one time Fascism was accepted by its adherents as a national aspiration, applicable only to Italy. More recently a new note has crept into its literature, encouraged, perhaps, by a conscious imitation of the Fascist State and its methods by Poland, Jugo-Slavia, and, to a certain extent, in Germany and elsewhere. "The choice of the twentieth century lies between Fascism and Communism," stated an official Order Sheet of the Fascist Party. With what superb assurance do the twin dictators of Moscow and Rome join hands and dismiss liberty, parliamentary government, and all that liberalism stands for in Europe with a shrug of the shoulders. Complacently, they visualise Fascism and Communism as permanent methods of human government, with generation after generation of "rebels" passing to the islands or to Siberia, there to pay the price of their heresies.

Anti-Fascists, naturally, vehemently deny the truth of this assertion. Fascism, they say,—with its "tied" Parliament possessing no Opposition, its electoral system in which only Fascist candidates are permitted to seek the suffrages of the people, its series of enactments by which it imposes its opinions upon judges, teachers, press and public—will not long be tolerated in Italy, whatever its fate may be in Balkan countries with Balkanised methods of thought.

It is an axiom of history that nothing lasts as long as the provisional, and it may prove that the Italian professor of history was right who declared: "So many impossible things have happened in Italy during the past ten years, so many priceless qualities in our national life have been destroyed, that now I am not prepared to believe that anything is impossible—even the continuance of the present régime."

Yet whether it survives, or goes the way of the more humane and paternal Spanish dictatorship, it will remain true that Fascism, in its essentials, is an atavistic system of arbitrary government which belongs to a former less enlightened age.

Like Communism, having suppressed liberty utterly, it seeks to prevent it from raising its head again by imposing Fascist discipline upon the young. Continuous and strong pressure is put upon every boy and girl in Italy to become either a *Balilla* or a *Piccola Italiana*. In the main that pressure has succeeded, and such success bodes ill not for Italy alone but for all Europe. For the atmosphere in which the youth of Italy is being trained is one of the glorification of war. The very copy-books of the children show on their covers maps of the south-east of France, with a little *Balilla* gazing at the promised land which, he is taught, France robbed from Italy by treachery and violence. Win their confidence, and they will tell you with shining eyes how their heart's wish is that they "may be big enough to fight when it comes." To those who remember pre-war Germany, the similarity is unmistakable. Italy's present financial straits, the budget deficit, and the consequent impossibility of carrying out a large naval and military programme, have made Mussolini sing smaller of late and give a truce to sabre-rattling, but nevertheless the dragon's teeth are sown, and a whole generation is growing up primed for battle.

Meanwhile the Italian shipyards and arsenals are working—for Soviet Russia. The pact between Fascism and Bolshevism is no longer a secret; and those who at one and the same time shriek at the "dumping menace" and belaud Fascism, might well take note that much of the so-called Russian "dumping" is carried out by Italian ships. A few years ago the St. Gothard incident revealed that Italy was sending arms into Hungary. It has been publicly declared in Germany—and never refuted—that Fascism has been subsidising Hitler's *Nazi* and the Austrian *Heimwehr*—in short, Fascist Italy is allied with all the forces of reaction and violence menacing the peace of Europe.

In a study like the present I have not space to touch on the manifestations of Fascist tyranny in Libya—which has led to a desperate appeal to the League of Nations on the part of the Mohammedan populations, 80,000 of whom have been forcibly deported into the desert; nor on the oppression of the Germans in the Tyrol, and the Jugo-Slavs in Istria—an oppression which on March 19 led the Bishops of Croatia to organise a solemn religious protest and day of prayer. Both the colonial question and the question of minorities are distinct and separate problems, too vast to be adequately treated here. In the Tyrol and Istria, Fascism has waged a pitiless war on local language and custom; nothing but Italian may be taught in the schools, families have been forced to Italianise their names, and even preaching in the Slav tongue is forbidden. The prisons and deportation islands are filled with Jugo-Slavs, many of them guilty only of attachment to traditional ways, but it is well to distinguish that in these regions resistance has been more active than in Italian Italy; violent reaction, repressed with greater violence, has in some cases led to a state almost of civil war.

The most damaging charge, however, against Fascism, is not so much concerned with material violence as with the moral atmosphere it has created.

"I have no quarrel with Signor Mussolini for abolishing Parliament," wrote Professor Walter Murdoch of Melbourne University (*Melbourne Argus*, February 25, 1929). "After all, representative government was a comparatively recent importation into Italy from England; and we may freely admit that what suits England fairly well may not at all suit another country, with quite different traditions. Neither am I concerned to criticise the syndicalism—the so-called Corporative State—which has been set up in place of Parliament; I know that both employers and employed look upon it with the blackest misgivings; and I do not believe it will work, but that is a mere opinion. My detestation of Fascism is not based on a mere question of political machinery. It is based on my observation of the moral and spiritual state into which Fascism has brought the country. All those vices now thrive in Italy which have always thriven in lands where liberty was destroyed. Suspicion, spying, whispering, tale-bearing, sycophancy, hypocrisy, are the natural fruits of the Fascist revolution. Read Mr. Trevelyan's account of the state of things in Naples under the Bourbon kings; as Naples then was, Italy is to-day."

When it was announced that Zamboni, a sixteen-year-old boy, had been lynched on the presumption—which subsequently proved improbable—that he was the author of an attempt on Mussolini's life, the news was greeted with pæans of triumph by high official personages, and with silence on the part of those whose duty it was to protest. To this silence there was one public exception: the Bishop of

Vicenza gave utterance to a few guarded words of disapprobation, with the result that he was mobbed by the *Fascisti* and had to seek police protection. No better example could be found of "the moral and spiritual state" Professor Murdoch so justly deplores.

Quite a number of those now in the ranks of the silent anti-Fascists were Fascists in the early days, and have become disgusted with the violence, the spying and repression by which it has ruled their country. After a certain political trial a lawyer's bib was picked up on the floor of the empty court-room. On it was written: "Here lies dead justice." The man who wrote that had been a "Fascist of the first hour."

The tragedy of Fascism is the tragedy of all dictatorships; it cannot turn back. It must replace those driven out of its ranks by old age, disgust or heresy hunts by the young who have grown to manhood under Fascist teachers. It cannot discover any method of compromising with that other Italy—the Italy that clings to the dream of liberty—without abolishing its own ruthless methods. And even the most enthusiastic Fascist would doubt the wisdom of calling off the terror. So it goes from violence to violence, no less loath to surrender any part of its armoury of repression than is its Communism counterpart in Russia.

The brutal assault on Signor Toscanini, a man of world fame, when he rashly returned to Italy in the May of this year to conduct a memorial concert, is a typical manifestation of the spirit deliberately fostered by Fascist "culture."

Fascism has never succeeded in winning the allegiance of the intellectuals. The best minds of Italy are to-day either in prison, on the islands, in exile, or else constrained to cautious reticence or silence. Meanwhile, the anti-Fascist challenge remains unanswered: Give us a single free newspaper, and Fascism will not last a day. Be that as it may, Mussolini dare not expose his régime to the solvent of undoctored truth.

Nothing has so hurt the feelings of those Italians who have, and still are, fighting the battle for liberty and freedom under great odds, as the comments heard in England that "after all, Italy was unfit for freedom." If Italy is unfit for freedom, then what nation is fit? Those who have refused to accept the Fascist régime are men whose fathers and grandfathers planned a free Italy, and risked all they had to achieve their dreams. It is only the other day, as history measures time, that Italy gave to the nineteenth century its most inspiring spectacle—of a people struggling to throw off the yoke of the oppressor and bringing to that task a courage and disregard of death before which Europe stood in admiring homage. Did Garibaldi and his legion march that Fascism should follow in their footsteps?

POLAND

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CHAPTER XX

THE VEILED DICTATORSHIP

"We are bound to you by the bonds of the struggle for freedom. We have grounds for special gratitude towards you, for you gave us hospitality when we, hunted by the police of the whole of Europe, could not find a resting place elsewhere. With your help we desire to win new territory for the power and rule of freedom."

JOSEPH PILSUDSKI, Polish revolutionary delegate to Austrian Social-Democratic Party Congress, October 31, 1912.

THE Republic of Poland, created by the peace treaties which followed the Great War, has been variously described as a banner bearer of European liberty and the bulwark of reactionary capitalism—the advance guard of civilisation standing athwart the path of Communist aggression, and a make-believe democracy governed by the methods of semi-Fascism.

Which of those views concerning Marshal Pilsudski and the democracy of Poland of which he was the stumbling-block, is right?

The history of Poland, since the day when the new Republic was established with such pomp and ceremony at Warsaw, is the history of a former revolutionary who planned the establishment of a personal autocracy over a freedom-loving people and who has ever regretted the concessions to the Western conception of democratic institutions admitted into that constitution, and not hesitated to block, by the mobilisation of naked reactionary forces, any and every attempt of the vehicle of that constitution—the *Sejm* (House of Commons)—to carry out the wishes of the majority of the Polish people, as expressed at successive elections.

It must be admitted that the creation of parliamentary institutions in Poland which would function satisfactorily, would not, in any case, have been a simple process. In none of the three distinct territories—formerly Russian, German and Austrian—of which the new Poland was composed, did there exist an informed and experienced democratic organisation or even experience.

Free political life in pre-war Poland existed only in Galicia, limited as it was to a provincial *Diet* and a weak representation in the Austrian Parliament. The six deputies who represented the German Poles in the *Reichstag* obviously could not dwell in the intricacies of political life since they were in Berlin only to defend the general Polish rights. Of course no Polish political life, either democratic or reactionary, could openly take place in that portion of the State which was previously a part of Czarist Russia.

Hence the germs of political life in Poland were struggling with difficulties in provincial Galicia (which contained less than 20 per cent of the total numbers of the Poles) or were of a clandestine and revolutionary character in the largest part of Poland, former Russian Poland, containing over two-thirds of the total of the Poles.

Here Pilsudski became one of the foremost leaders of the revolutionary Polish Socialist activities, leaving to Perl—the famous editor of the *Robotnik*—to the venerable Limanowski and others the intellectual leadership of the Socialist movement. Pilsudski was the organiser of revolt against the Czarist régime, of innumerable plots against the police, of *coups de main* against the authorities, of armed street manifestations.

He did not take any active part in the organisation of trade unions, but once they were organised he appeared as leader of the strikers in violent activities.

Only occasionally, when his more intellectual colleagues were in gaol or in exile did he help in editing *The Worker* or in any other written propaganda, but he was always heard of when there was a plot afoot against the hated Russian oppression.

He conquered thus the imagination of the Polish youth, and in this way the "Pilsudski legend" was started. This legend found its climax during the war when he became the head of the nucleus of the Polish independent army, the so-called "legions."

Moreover, the geographical situation of Poland and the dramatic events which occurred across its borders—in the Union of Soviet Social Republics—lent colour to the plea that strong government was essential if the newly-born Polish nation was not to be overwhelmed by the Communist State.

A further difficulty which existed, although Pilsudski did not at first recognise it, was the presence of substantial minorities devoid of Polish patriotism or tradition, in Silesia and the Ukraine; minorities sufficiently intransigent, especially in the Ukraine (where a Nationalist movement has long existed), to ensure that the task of assimilating these new citizens would tax the political wisdom of the Polish nation.

In fact until the re-birth of Poland, Pilsudski was truly a Polish Garibaldi, a man of tremendous personality and agile revolutionary genius for conspiracy. Unhappily there was no Cavour behind him, and he had neither the brains nor the preparation to become a great statesman or even a level-headed politician when new conditions arose for the new-born Polish State.

On one hand he had not the constructive capacities indispensable for a leader of a country which lost its political instinct during one hundred and fifty years of subjection to foreign governmental organisations; on the other hand he did not have the patience to stand aside and let the country settle through labours and newly acquired experience into its rôle in the European political area.

His egotism would not permit it. Backed as he was by the glammers of his almost legendary past he thought himself great enough to find short cuts in the evolution of modern Poland, he thought himself to be the expression of all Poland's ideas and ideals.

Ever since, in fact, the birth of new Poland he had never ceased

to oppose everything and everybody who was not intimately associated with himself.

Only in the field of foreign politics, or of Polish internal politics related to things abroad, did he bow to the inevitable and was obliged to make concessions, upon paper at all events, to Western sentiment. Hence a Parliament, a Cabinet, a President without wide powers, adult suffrage and lip-service to many other things for which the Marshal felt no affection, and in the efficacy of which he had no belief.

From the very first, indeed, there have existed two Governments in Poland. The Government elected by the people, and the hidden autocracy, represented by Pilsudski and the Army—the real fount of his power—which viewed the activities of the *Sejm* with unconcealed contempt, and agreed with the simple philosophy of their beloved leader that to stay the hand of democracy “the law must be broken if there is no other way.”

In this war of opposing forces victory has gone to the big battalions.

“I have allowed none of the three *Sejms* to do any work,” declared Pilsudski to Ignatius Daszynski, Marshal of the Polish Parliament, in June, 1929, and the boast was true. While Pilsudski has steadfastly refused every invitation to himself form a Government, he has used his power to decide both the political colour, and to limit the field of action, of the Governments which have held office during the last twelve years.

The first occasion when the Marshal used his power to dictate to Parliament was in the autumn of 1925, when the Government were considering the appointment of a general known to be opposed to him as Minister for War, with control over the Army. Pilsudski, who had retired from active politics, returned to Warsaw, interviewed the President and solemnly warned him that the proposed minister was “unacceptable.” The Government had not the courage to oppose the “dictator,” and General Zeligowski, Pilsudski’s close friend, received the appointment.

In 1926 Witos, leader of the Peasants’ Party, formed a Government in alliance with the Right Wing, who were Pilsudski’s opponents, and the new Minister for War in this Cabinet declared open hostilities against the men who presumed to oppose the decisions of the people of Poland by placing a large number of Army officers known to be Pilsudski-ites on the retired list. Faced with this challenge, Pilsudski resolved upon open revolt against the Parliament he had created.

Accompanied by twelve officers, and with the belief that the Army was behind him in this struggle with the people, he proceeded to Warsaw, where President Wojciechowski, a former comrade of Pilsudski’s revolutionary days (they had printed the forbidden *Worker* together), had issued a proclamation against him, urging the nation to keep calm in the face of this challenge.

And so, on the banks of the Vistula, the massed forces of the Government troops and Pilsudski-ites came face to face, while Poland

waited for the first shot which would be the signal for the long-expected armed struggle in defence of the constitution.

The President invited Pilsudski to meet him—to talk things over.

"Marshal, you're taking a great responsibility," said the aged Wojciechowski. "The Republic intends to defend its constitution; it has no intention of giving way to rebels. I must ask you, please, to order your troops to retire."

"Let the Witos Government resign and I will retire," replied the dictator.

"Impossible," answered the President. "The Government was legally elected. It speaks for the people."

"Then I shall take Warsaw and force it to retire," replied Pilsudski, imply.

"We shall prevent you," answered the President. "I, the President of this Republic, elected by the people, warn you."

But in the hours that followed Pilsudski proved stronger than the constitution. The bulk of the Army flocked to his standard. The forces of personal ambition triumphed over the people and their Parliament. In less than a week the civil war was over, and a new Government had been formed under the leadership of Professor Bartel, Pilsudski's devoted admirer, with Pilsudski in the Cabinet as Minister for War. The struggle had left him in control of the Army—the only force that mattered. It was a triumph for the cause of violence against democracy.

Two weeks later Pilsudski was elected President of the new Parliament, but he declined the honour. "Such work as I desire to do," he wrote to the Speaker of the *Sejm*, "cannot, as the constitution stands, be done by presidents."

Other Governments came and went; in 1929 the "Cabinet of Colonels" took office, pledged to Pilsudski, their inspirer, to carry through a reform of the constitution which would keep Poland safe for autocracy. With the exception of two short terms in office Pilsudski continued to evade direct power; still preserved the democratic shadow in order to conceal the true nature of the forces which governed Poland. And when the General Election of 1928 left his followers in a minority of 172 seats in the *Sejm*, and it became obvious that no majority existed for the dictator in a democratically conducted election, and that therefore no hope existed of securing the passage through the *Sejm* of a bill to restrict the power of the Polish Parliament and increase that of the President, Pilsudski resolved to use the whole forces of his "government of puppets," both open and overt, to break the deadlock and recover absolute power.

The Polish General Election of 1930 released all the forces of unrestricted terrorism upon the people of that country in Pilsudski's desperate effort to prevent, at any cost, the return of yet another Parliament which reflected the opposition of the Polish people to his reactionary activities and ambitions. To destroy what the Marshal

called "a caricature of parliamentarism" the Marshal released his henchman, Colonel Slawek, the Prime Minister, in August, 1929, and himself took that office during the critical months leading up to the appeal to the country.

Pilsudski then proceeded to destroy even the semblance of political liberty which had existed in Poland, and to promote an organised campaign of terrorism to intimidate, subdue and remove dangerous opponents.

The extent to which criticism of Polish institutions was permitted had always been severely restricted under the various Governments which Pilsudski had jockeyed into power. It was in "democratic" Poland that on June 11, 1930, three persons were condemned to death, by the Assize Court at Lemberg, for Communist activities. Their "crime" consisted in their having erected a printing press in the house of a fourth prisoner, and there producing Communist leaflets which they afterwards distributed. For this they were accused of treason against the State under an old Austrian Act of 1852 which applied to the former Austrian districts of Poland, of which Lemberg forms a part. This Act was resurrected by the Pilsudski-ist Government in order to obtain a sentence of death upon these Communists for expressing their political views.

Those attempting to circulate more moderate opinions, but who were opposed to the dictator of Poland, fared little better.

The Warsaw Socialist newspaper *Robotnik* has been repeatedly suppressed by the police for criticising Government policy or reporting information banned by the censor. The newspaper of the German minority *Volkszeitung*, published at Lodz, was confiscated because it printed a speech made by M. Vandervelde, chairman of the Second International. The same fate overtook the *Naprzod* at Cracow for publishing news concerning the military occupation of the coal mines.

On November 25, 1929, the London *Daily Herald* published an article headed "Marshal Pilsudski's methods," pointing out that an attempt to overthrow democratic institutions and to set up a military dictatorship in Poland (then believed to be imminent) would impose a severe strain on British friendship towards Poland.

Four days later the *Daily Herald* reported that the *Robotnik* had been confiscated by the police for printing a translation of this article.

"The *Robotnik's* editor had been careful to omit one or two passages to which he had thought the censor might object," stated the *Daily Herald*. "And he had added an expression of hope that the censor would not conceal from the people of Poland the views of the British Labour paper. 'It is,' he added, 'the British Labour Government which has just paid Poland the compliment of raising its Legation in Warsaw to the status of an Embassy.' In spite of this all issues of the paper were immediately seized by the police."

There have existed in Poland during recent years some fifty trade union papers, and some twenty dailies and seventy weekly and monthly

publications reflecting the opinions of the various Opposition parties. All have from time to time been suppressed, censored or extinguished by official pressure. Printing offices are closed down by police action, and other printing firms intimidated so that they dare not produce the publication affected, even though its contents transgress none of the laws of normal journalistic practice or "fair comment."

The Terror had other forms. Violence was not unknown, even during the years of comparative quiescence which preceded the terrorist General Election of 1930.

Thus Pragier, member of the Central Executive Committee of the Polish Socialist Party and a member of the *Sejm*, was attacked at Pruszkow, near Warsaw, on December 15, 1929, and severely beaten, while on his way to speak at a Socialist meeting.

And there were dark hints concerning the mysterious fate of General Zagorski, who was called from Vilna to Warsaw, where he disappeared without leaving any trace—until the next day, when his corpse—headless—was found and quickly buried. Senator Trampczynski, a leader of the Right, raised the subject of this murder in Parliament. The newspapers began to make pointed comments upon it. Whereupon several journalists were attacked at night and severely handled, one of them having an eye knocked out. The culprits who carried out these attacks arrived and drove away in a motor-car belonging to police headquarters!

Hand in hand with methods of repression, attempts were made to discredit the *Sejm* and its members which stood in the path of Pilsudski and his wishes.

Foreign visitors to Poland were informed that "the members of the *Sejm* in general lack experience and authority; they do not constitute the *élite*; they are inferior to their mission."

"We know this tune," stated Jean Locquin,¹ the French deputy, shortly after Pilsudski had taken office as Prime Minister in 1929. "The same language was used long ago by Cromwell, by Bonaparte on the 18th *Brumaire*, by Prince Napoleon on the 2nd December, and more recently by Mussolini. As for ourselves, in coming into contact with members of the *Sejm*, whose guests we were, we did not experience this unfavourable impression. We found there a considerable proportion of politicians of high culture and great experience, fine consciences and noble characters like our friend President Daszynski, in whose hands the Polish State can place its destiny in all confidence.

"In that case, why these threats against Parliament? Is it believed that civil war will advance things? We shall hope that before attempting the adventure the present rulers of Poland will reflect, and that they will spare the growing Republic new and cruel trials, the consequences of which they cannot foresee."

Poland—and those who stood for liberty and government of the

¹ Quoted from *Populaire* (Paris), of November 29, 1929.

people by the people in that country—was not to be spared those trials. They came as soon as the preparations for the General Election campaign of 1930 were complete. Then it was that the political terror in Poland assumed its worst form.

Pilsudski's avowed object was to secure a majority for the Government *Bloc* over all other parties in the new Parliament—and to secure it by any means. This "packed" majority would be used to force through a reform of the Polish Constitution designed to deprive democracy of its rights and perpetuate a reactionary majority in the Lower House. And in approaching this task the Dictator had both the Army and the machinery of government at his command.

To this end Pilsudski devoted his energies during the weeks before the polls opened. Political partisanship has run high in Poland for ten years past, but there is surely no counterpart in Europe, outside Fascist Italy, for the sort of abuse which the Marshal saw fit to pour not only upon individual opponents, but upon the whole constitution of Poland.

One example of Marshal Pilsudski's rhetoric will suffice to reveal the quality of his arguments, which after all did not matter very much, since Pilsudski had no intention of relying upon argument for securing his victory.

In an interview which appeared in the *Gazeta Polska*, the Government newspaper, in August, 1930, Marshal Pilsudski, having stated that the elected deputies had no right to rule Poland, went on to say: "The Constitution . . . at present is like a piece of rotting meat mixed with foul bacon and putrid cabbage, and as much unwashed as the spirit of the Deputies who in Poland are an infamous band. The entire work of the Parliament stinks so that the air is poisoned."

Early in the election campaign, the Government arrested a number of deputies and imprisoned twenty in Brest-Litovsk fortress.

"It is established that on the orders of Marshal Pilsudski eighty-eight deputies of the old *Sejm* were arrested under vain pretexts some weeks before the elections; that twenty of them, including men like Liebermann (aged sixty-six) and Barlicki, Vice-President and President of the Socialist Party, Witos, the former Peasant Prime Minister, Korfanty, a Christian Democrat and one of the principal leaders in the struggle for independence before the war, were incarcerated, contrary to the law, in the military prison of Brest-Litovsk," declared Emile Vandervelde.¹

These deputies were the advance guard of thousands of opposition supporters and trade union secretaries who were flung into prison in the course of the election campaign.

The Polish trade unions were attacked, their branches forcibly dissolved, their funds controlled and their members victimised.

¹ Preface to *By Order of Marshal Pilsudski* (Labour and Socialist International, Zurich, 1931).

Among those imprisoned was the president of the Polish Trade Union Federation.

These arrests were made in order to make it impossible for some of the most dangerous critics of Pilsudski to conform to the requirements of the electoral law. It was a deliberate campaign of terrorism which aimed at the removal of inconvenient opponents.

On the heels of violence came trickery, open and unashamed. Polish elections are held under proportional representation and the lists of candidates prepared by the various parties are only allowed to be placed before the electors if each list is signed by fifty persons who are qualified by Polish citizenship, age, etc., as prescribed by law.

This provision of the Polish electoral law was designed to discourage the compilation of "freak" lists, much in the same way as the British law requires a deposit of £150 to be handed over at the time of nomination, which is returned if the candidate receives one-eighth of the total votes polled. How the Pilsudski-ites used this regulation to secure their "victory" is now history.

"If an Opposition list was to be annulled, the following method was adopted: The list carried more than enough signatures to make it valid. A member of the Electoral Commission presented himself, after the period allowed for depositing the lists, at the house of one of the signatories, and said to him pointedly:

"'You have placed your signature at the foot of Number Seven List?'

"'Yes,' replied the signatory, 'it is not a crime.'

"'No, it is your right. But then, do you know the candidates on that list?'

"'Yes, I know them.'

"'Very well, would you mind telling me their names?'

"It is the old story of the forty members of the French Academy. The signatory puts forward two, three, four, five names—then hesitates and stops.

"'You see, you do not know them all. You cannot tell me which candidates figure in the list that has been personally guaranteed by you.'

"The Commissioner immediately files a report of his investigations. The signature of the citizen who was cross-examined is annulled. The procedure is repeated with others until the legal total of fifty signatures no longer exists. The list then becomes invalid, there being no time for another to be presented, since the depositing period has expired.

"By this means, sixty Opposition lists in twelve districts were annulled, depriving the Opposition of sixty absolutely certain seats before the actual opening of the poll."¹

¹ M. Jean Locquin in *Les Cahiers des droits de l'Homme* (Paris), January 10, 1931.

Another method of "dishing the Opposition" is revealed in the following message :

"The German minority at Graudenz submitted a list which, for safety's sake, was accompanied by a hundred signatures. The Poles, it was thought, might disqualify a few of these signatures, but not fifty-one. As a matter of fact the Poles disqualified fifty-eight, and so the Germans at Graudenz have been disenfranchised. Signatures are disqualified by various subtle devices—for example, it is quite a common thing for a so-called 'graphologist' to be asked to decide whether the signatures are forged or not, and he is, of course, only too willing to say they are, in which case redress is rarely possible. Or some unknown persons declare that the signatories are not Polish subjects, or are minors, whereupon they are simply disallowed without any appeal.

"Individual voters are also disqualified in great numbers—for example, they are informed, say, on the 15th of the month that there are doubts as to their Polish citizenship, but if they prove the contrary on the 14th of the same month these doubts will be removed and they will be entitled to vote.

"The number of persons who have been deprived of the franchise either by individual disqualification or by disqualification of party lists probably amounts to hundreds of thousands, perhaps even to a million by now."¹

Prior to the election the Pilsudski Government had taken the further precaution of launching the "B.B.S.," a pseudo-Socialist Party specially created to draw votes from the Opposition. Similarly, a "fake" German Party was formed in German Poland in opposition to the party formed by the German population, and pressure was brought to bear upon Government servants, such as railwaymen, to canvass votes for this spurious group.

Railwaymen were assigned a number of houses and ordered to secure a number of votes from those houses for the new party. And each railwayman was told : "We cannot legally dismiss you, but if you do not get your ten votes you will have to face the consequences." And what applies to the railwaymen applied to all State employees ; which in Poland, where industries, salt mines and factories are owned by the State, means fully 25 per cent of the entire working population of the country, all of whom are dependent upon the Government for their weekly pay envelope.

Intimidation was extended to industrialists also. Manufacturers and merchants suspected of being in sympathy with the Opposition parties received visits from Government supporters, who threatened the withdrawal of their credit facilities at the State Bank unless they changed their opinions or at least refrained from voting.

The better to check the efficacy of these measures, the electors were

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 12, 1930.

invited, through the press and by Government speakers, to prove their "loyalty" towards the "national hero" by voting with their ballot papers exposed!

After polling day the official paper *Pat* published the news that "a considerable proportion of the electors voted openly, without hiding their ballot papers."

By November 12, over eighty deputies of the former *Sejm* were confined in various prisons. Permission to visit those deputies in Brest-Litovsk being forbidden, it was not possible to secure from those incarcerated there early in the campaign the declarations which Polish law requires that they were prepared to take their seats if re-elected. Nor were they permitted to engage counsel to represent them, which would have enabled the question of their arrests to be raised in the Polish courts. One of their number, however, Liebermann, had foreseen possible arrest and had taken the necessary precautions, including the engagement of a counsel beforehand, and the signature of a statement expressing his readiness to accept a seat if elected.

Among those arrested at Tarnow was Ciolkosz, the Socialist deputy, Witos, former Premier of the Republic, and a young worker named Jwanjez. The latter was found hanging in his cell in the prison the next day. The dead man's family asked the Socialist leader Skirut to apply to the Court for the body to be handed over for decent burial.

Upon the appearance of Skirut in court the examining judge ordered the police to arrest Skirut also. The Socialist, unaware of this development, left the building. He was followed by police who fired two shots, but without hitting him. Upon coming up to him, the police threw him to the ground, handcuffed him and led him back to the court to be committed to prison.

No charge of any sort had been made against the arrested deputies, the boy Jwanjez or Skirut.

M. Jean Domb ski, a retiring deputy who had been Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was brutally attacked one evening at the door of his home by three officers and an N.C.O., who beat him so savagely that his health has become permanently affected, and he was confined to his room for months afterwards. His daughter, a child of twelve, witnessed the assault, and called for help. Whereupon the assailants turned upon her and beat her unmercifully.

While this campaign of personal violence continued, opposition newspapers were being suppressed, and anyone who let it be known, by speech or action, that they were sympathetic to any of the parties other than "No. 1"—the Pilsudski list, or "No. 2"—the pseudo-Socialist "B.B.S." Party, did so at their peril. Ranged against the dictatorship were twenty odd parties—their lists numbered from 3 to 26, but the visitor to Warsaw in those days would have seen little sign of the existence of these parties, which a freely conducted election would probably have shown to be a majority of at least ten votes to one.

"No one will with impunity let a room to any party other than No. 1 or No. 2 for meetings or for committee work, even for a single evening. Firms that print posters or pamphlets for the Opposition do so at their peril."¹

The same writer stated :

"Every possibility afforded by the law and the situation is squeezed and twisted into the service of the Terror. For example large 1's were painted across a country road one night. Some men of the Opposition altered them to 4's (the number of an Opposition Party), but they were caught and sentenced to five years' imprisonment each, for he who hinders a Polish subject in the free exercise of his civic rights (of which the franchise is one) may be punished with imprisonment not exceeding five years.

"All the authorities, from the *Voevods* or Governors of provinces, to the humblest *Soltys* or mayors of the smallest parishes, know that failure to squeeze enough votes for the Government out of those who are under their authority may mean dismissal and destitution."

The denial of free speech by the smashing up of Opposition meetings was a nightly occurrence. A few minutes before the hour arranged for the meeting, Government supporters would invade the committee rooms or place of assembly, wreck the furniture, extinguish the light, and depart. In the face of this organised violence to express one's opinion concerning the issues of the election was a highly perilous pastime.

"People talked in low voices ; they looked round before exchanging opinions ; they felt they were being watched and spied upon by agents of the gloomy dictator who occupies the Belvedere Palace."²

The supporters of Pilsudski, on the other hand, were correspondingly elated. The picture of the Marshal, in his sky-blue uniform, was everywhere. Motor coaches, filled with soldiers and rowdies dashed up and down Warsaw and other cities, churning up not only dust, but the declarations of faith, leaflets, propaganda sheets and election pamphlets filled with praises of the Government which littered the roadways.

On September 29, 1930, Ignaz Daszynski, the Marshal of the Polish Parliament, addressed to the President of the Polish Republic a protest against this campaign of terror and bloodshed :

"Two killed, nearly a hundred wounded, and hundreds arrested from all sections of the people with whose help Josef Pilsudski

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1930.

² M. Jean Locquin in *Les Cahiers des Droits de l'Homme*, January 10, 1931.

fought for independence and protected Poland from invasion : killed, rounded and arrested on the occasion of demonstrations against his system of government ; this is a serious warning cry for all who care for the future of the Fatherland.

"Gang attacks and lynch justice form a dismal background.

"The cursing and disparaging of the Constitution, of the principles of public order, to which an oath had been taken only a short time before ; the violation of laws, which one has signed oneself, the cursing and calumniating of Ministers and deputies to whom one had turned for help in tragic moments in 1920, the audacity to curse a people, to whose heroism alone the salvation of the country is due, as a 'people of idiots,' a régime which relies upon the police and the censorship which one fought against oneself a quarter of a century ago ;—all this destroys in the hearts of millions of citizens their faith and attachment to the country and its institutions.

"The fear is making itself felt that the election campaign will not proceed in a normal and quiet manner, and that the elections themselves will not take place freely and honestly. This would block the last reasonable and peaceful way out of the situation created by the May Government. For falsified elections, elections accompanied by terror and the misleading of public opinion by means of lies ; such elections are no solution."

The appeal of Marshal Daszynski was not heeded ; the Opposition leaders remained behind the prison walls of Brest-Litovsk, where none might visit them to see the conditions in which they lived. The violence, intimidation and suppressions of the "made" election continued outside right up to November 6 and 13, the polling days.

"The resources, both overt and hidden, of the administration and the police have been used to subdue the Opposition, convert the timid voter and influence the result of the polls with a thorough-paced effrontery still unknown at the last election," stated *The Times* (November 15). "Since a selected batch of party leaders were confined in the fortress of Brzesc (Brest-Litovsk), arrests of lesser lights have been of daily occurrence. Opposition newspapers have been penalised for alleged unsanitary condition of premises, arrears of taxes, and the like, and have been censored with unusual severity."

With the election thus "supervised," it is perhaps not surprising that Pilsudski secured the absolute majority of seats in the new *Sejm* which was the purpose of this campaign of violence. "The votes of the electorate have been cast in such a way as to secure unembarrassed parliamentary power for the Government party," declared *The Times*, "which is how Marshal Pilsudski intended that they should be cast."

The final results showed that the Pilsudski Party had grown from 132 to 249 members, thus winning 117 seats, and giving the Dictator

a majority over all other parties of 55. Although this result did not provide the two-thirds majority required to amend the constitution, terrorist methods had broken the deadlock between Dictator and Parliament, whereas under any form of freely-held elections the swing of the pendulum would have gone against Pilsudski. The Marshal had, therefore, every right to feel grateful towards the terrorists he had unloosed upon the Polish people.

"The electoral victory of the Polish Dictatorship is the triumph of force and fraud," stated the Warsaw correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (November 18, 1930). "Old revolutionaries, who are hardened to almost anything, declare that even under the Czar there was nothing so completely shameless and cynical as these elections. It is almost idle to discuss the returns in detail—they are too big an imposture, and have too little relationship to the real state of feeling in Poland. A discredited government that would normally have lost a great many (some say one hundred) seats has gained more than a hundred.

"This might seem to be a miracle, but it is precisely what every one expected. By disqualifying 24 lists of the Opposition parties the Dictatorship secured about a third of the 444 seats of Parliament before the polling. Violence, intimidation and trickery did the rest."

A few cases which reveal the Pilsudski brand of "intimidation," and which occurred immediately before or during this election, may be placed upon record.

At Radom, during the night of November 15-16, a group of Government supporters attacked and severely ill-treated two members of the Polish Socialist Party, Walczek and Jaworowski. The two victims were taken to hospital unconscious, one of them being in a critical condition. No arrests were made.

During the same night, a gang of men armed with revolvers forced their way into the printing works of the Jewish newspaper *Hajnt*, demolished the furniture and fittings and smashed the type used in producing the paper. This act of sabotage lasted for half an hour, during which editor and staff were kept at bay with revolvers.

At Cracow, on polling day, the police interfered persistently with the workers of Opposition parties, driving them away from the polling stations, and removing many of them to police stations where they were kept under arrest for several hours during the progress of the polling. In all 129 persons were arrested during the hours of voting. On the other hand, military cars were placed at the disposal of officials of the Government parties.

At Stryj a wooden box with holes in it was used as a ballot box. The votes were afterwards counted by a village teacher, a policeman and a representative of the Government Party. The police refused to allow the election committee to see the election documents.

In another area, in the district of Zywiec, the local election committee declared about 28,000 Opposition voting papers to be spoilt,

alleging that all these papers bore other signs in addition to the number 7 (the number of the party concerned).

A woman candidate, Irene Kosmowska, a former deputy of the Peasant Party, was arrested and later sentenced to six months' imprisonment because she declared that Pilsudski was crazy ! Another woman Socialist, Zielinska, was severely injured by a splinter from a hand grenade thrown during a demonstration in Warsaw, and a third was imprisoned for three weeks at Cracow before being brought before a court, charged with the " offence " of *having spoken against Pilsudski at meetings !*

While Marshal Pilsudski was thus proving his contempt for democracy and the fundamental rights of man by staging a " caricature of free elections," reports were filtering through to Western Europe of terrible conditions inflicted on the group of Opposition deputies imprisoned, without trial, in the fortress of Brest-Litovsk.

For two months these Opposition leaders, all men prominent in the public life of Poland, were " submitted to veritable tortures, beaten, flogged, trampled under foot, threatened with death, obliged to clean the latrines, reduced to eating unclean things in order to live, tormented by servile brutes, whose base instincts of violence and cruelty were still further stimulated with a refinement of sadism by their superiors, acting under orders."¹

Lest that statement of events within the prison of Brest-Litovsk should be considered a partisan version, it may be interesting to quote here the open letter which forty-six Professors of Cracow University, members of all parties, addressed to their colleague, Professor Krzyzanowski, Professor of Political Economy and a member of the Government *Bloc* in the *Sejm*, as a protest against the atrocities which had occurred :

" We are deeply convinced that many events of recent years shake the moral foundations of the social and political life of Poland and thereby threaten the development and, as a further consequence, the very existence of the Polish realm. Among these events the affair at Brest-Litovsk is the most threatening. The occurrence in Brest-Litovsk cannot be sanctioned by the silence of the thinking social classes.

" We fear that their interest with regard to Brest-Litovsk is not adequate. In addition it can easily be incorrect and falsified when it comes from people who have an interest in concealing the truth.

" We therefore submit a short extract of our information on the events at Brest-Litovsk :

" (1) The arrested : former Ministers of the Polish Republic, members of the *Sejm* (including men who are decorated with the highest civil and military orders) were without exception compelled to undertake the meanest tasks.

¹ Statement by Emile Vandervelde, January 6, 1931.

" In particular, they were compelled by the most brutal methods of moral and physical force to clean the floors in the cells, in offices and in the corridors of the prison, to carry and empty the refuse pails from their own cells, and also to clean the latrines set apart for the administrative staff of the prison, being compelled to remove the refuse from the pails with their bare hands.

" (2) The prisoners were starved for two months. They were served with a quarter of a loaf of bread daily and cattle food consisting of rotten cabbage, cattle turnips, uncleaned carrots and potatoes.

" (3) The most severe internal regulations of the military prison were aggravated still further against the political prisoners, who were after all imprisoned pending trial, by means of a whole system of chicanery and provocation.

" If an order was not obeyed quickly or correctly enough, or if a military salute (standing to attention and saluting) was not given exactly in accordance with the regulations, the prisoners were humiliatingly cursed, and various punishments, such as hard beds, darkness and fasts, were imposed upon them. Their stay in the dark chamber (a dark, unheated cell without a straw mattress) lasted as long as nine days.

" (4) Added to these horrible disciplinary punishments was physical torture. Old and exhausted men were forbidden to lie or sit on their straw mattresses during the day. When sitting on the prison stools they were not even allowed to lean against the mattress.

" (5) The prisoners were often awakened during the night and conducted to a dark and cold cell under the pretext of a body inspection. There they were completely undressed and placed with their faces to the wall, while wails and shots were heard near by.

" (6) In addition to this, individual prisoners were beaten, and in particular their ears were boxed. They were belaboured with fists according to the 'rapid process,' but in various cases were even directly tortured by special process.

" All these events, which have no parallel in the world, must be described as a scandal of the twentieth century. We must condemn them from the standpoint of humanity. We must brand them as a serious injury to Poland. Brest-Litovsk disgraces the name of Poland in Europe. Brest is an element of decay and corruption in the life of Poland."

Further details of these atrocities, which became known at a later date, showed that the arrested deputies were accommodated in single cells which had no windows, and walls that ran with moisture. The "furniture" of these cells consisted of a bench, with straw mattress without pillow or covering, and the food supplied to the prisoners (who were forbidden to secure food from outside the prison) consisted mainly of groats twice a day. The prisoners had been arrested without

warning, when wearing light clothes, but requests of their families for permission to send them warm clothing and bedclothes was refused by the Governor.

No charge was preferred against these political victims of the Pilsudski régime, and all were "released on bail" after the election which I have described. The men who were thus subjected to totally illegal detention by the Polish Government were disinclined to discuss their experiences while in the prison house, but the horrors of Brest-Litovsk could not be kept silent.

The first to challenge the Government by speaking frankly about events during their period of detention was Senator Andreas Strug, a Polish author, who brought grave charges against the Polish administration in the course of an article published in the *Robotnik*. The issue containing the article was confiscated by the police, but a few copies reached the outside world, and from one of these I quote the substance of Senator Strug's testimony :

"All the prisoners were systematically starved for two months. They were given nothing but selected repulsive food, and only a very little of this. The bread they received was less than a soldier's ration. Many of the prisoners chewed the straw of their mattresses in their hunger. Only in the last fortnight did they receive the normal food of soldiers.

"Nearly all of them were tortured and beaten, most of them several times. Some of them were repeatedly tormented. Many were completely stripped of their clothing and placed with their faces to the wall, and in this position they waited for the death shots. Ultimately a shot came, and a revolver bullet struck the wall near their heads. All of them were cursed and struck in the face. They lived in a condition of humiliation and insult, and of the worst deprivation."

Senator Strug, in his article, indicted Car, Minister of Justice, and his successor Michalowski, who directed this treatment, as mainly responsible for these outrages upon innocent and honoured men, and demanded their punishment.

Thus the conjecture that the Polish Dictatorship had been guilty of excesses against its opponents behind the grim walls of Brest-Litovsk Prison became a frightful certainty.

In December, 1930, the parties of the Left raised the matter in the *Sejm*, and in the course of the debate remarkable allegations were brought against the Government.

In the course of the debate, it was revealed that nearly all the twenty had been arrested at night. As soon as they were in the hands of the police their sufferings began. Thus Liebermann was taken from a motor-car when the procession of prisoners had reached a forest beyond Siedlce. There the guards attacked him furiously, kicking and beating him with the butts of their rifles ; then,

having forced him to half undress, they thrashed him with sticks, imitating the methods of Czarist days.

This torture over, they made him go down on his knees and kiss the ground, saying to him: "What land are you kissing?" He replied: "The land of Poland." "No," they answered him, "it is Marshal Pilsudski's land." He was beaten harder than ever until he repeated this phrase. At last he was ordered back to the waiting motor-car, upon reaching which he fainted.

At Brest-Litovsk prison the tortures continued. The officers and guards insulted and struck the prisoners on every possible occasion. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, officers, revolver in hand, entered their cells, and after covering their heads with a cloth, conducted them to another room, where they were thrashed. If the unfortunate men fainted, cold water was thrown over them and the operations recommenced; the torture lasting three or four hours.

From time to time their immediate execution was announced, and they were actually taken to the place where they were to die, only to be marched back again to their cells.

To physical torture was added mental torture. They were compelled to renounce their political opinions and their friends, to sign political declarations, to give their resignations in advance in case they should be re-elected to the new *Sejm*. Nothing which a devilish ingenuity could devise to wound their dignity was omitted.

"The officers in command of the prison are stated to have declared that the fate of the prisoners depended entirely on the decision of Marshal Pilsudski. If he ordered it, they would be killed or maimed."¹

During the whole period of their detention, they were cut off from all contact with the outside world. No visitors were permitted; nor were they allowed any correspondence from relatives or supporters, a violation of the rights of prisoners which led to a strong, but ineffectual, protest being made by the faculty of advocates.

Similarly, no books or newspapers were allowed. Neither were any of the "politicals" permitted to smoke. No games or mental recreation of any description was provided during the first period of their confinement; later chess was permitted.

An appeal was made to Demant, the examining judge, on one of his visits, for books and cigarettes. It was refused. As a protest the prisoners engaged in a shouting campaign, and beat upon their cell doors, but the only effect of this demonstration was the infliction of further indignities upon them during the following days.

Thus fared the twenty deputies in the cells of Brest-Litovsk, while nearly seventy more were imprisoned elsewhere without any legal sort of justification.

"The history of the contemporary dictatorships contains pages that are more bloody," declared Émile Vandervelde, of the Opposition Interpellation in the *Sejm* concerning Brest-Litovsk atrocities. "I

¹ Interpellation presented by Deputy Czapinski in the *Sejm* on December 16, 1930.

venture to say that it does not contain any more ignominious. Others have been able to dissolve parliaments by force, to drive out the national representative bodies with bayonets, to deliver over to the bands of assassins opponents who had been defeated but whose prestige they had reason to fear.

"It was reserved for a government which still dares to present itself at Geneva as the Government of a free people to commit against the men and institutions of the democracy the vilest, most despicably hypocritical and (this word alone conveys the whole of my thought) most vicious outrage that Europe has known for ten years past."

That it thus proved possible to arrest eighty-eight Members of Parliament, some of them men to whom Pilsudski owes much, and spirit them away to distant military fortresses and prisons without any charge being brought against them, and without anyone being permitted to interview them during the whole three months of their imprisonment, reveals how strong is the grip of the Dictator upon Poland, and how complete is the absence of those elementary safeguards of the liberty of the subject which the peoples of Western Europe associate with parliamentary government.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE UKRAINE

"Freedom is more sacred than all else, and I would prefer a free and poor fatherland to one rich and enslaved. I would rather see it free and its palaces in ruins than cowering beneath the rod of a barbarian."

GARIBALDI.

UNDER the Peace Treaty of Versailles, a population of Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia estimated to number over 3,000,000 and closely united by bonds of language, speech and history, found themselves incorporated within the new Republic of Poland. This population of Eastern Galicia together with another two and a half million Ukrainians in Volhynia and other parts of Poland, form one of the national minorities within the Polish State (another is the Germans of Silesia) and their national and individual rights are nominally protected by the Minorities Treaty which formed part of the settlement following the war and the Versailles Peace Conference.

In practice, this treaty has proved quite useless to the Ukrainians, who complain that ever since coming under a Polish Government they have been subjected to every kind of persecution, from the right to maintain their own schools and petty discrimination to bloody terrorism and mass violence, at the hands of the Polish Government.

As a minority protected by treaty, the Ukrainians have the right to petition the League of Nations in order to secure redress of their grievances, and the Ukrainian Parliament Party—that is, the chosen leaders of the Ukrainian people—have in recent years addressed no fewer than thirty-eight petitions to the League, appealing for an international investigation into their grievances.

"Of these only fourteen have been considered 'receivable.' Seven out of those fourteen were never heard of again, while the remaining seven were referred to the League Council, which does not seem to have done anything about them whatsoever. In at least one instance the Polish authorities even victimised the petitioners, who had done no more than exercise a right guaranteed by an international treaty. In one case a petition addressed to the League by Ukrainian parents was confiscated by the Polish authorities."

The Ukrainians, as these facts indicate, are not inclined to accept Polish domination longer than is unavoidable. They want home rule, and maintain a persistent agitation to that end, just as did the Irish through two generations. This ideal of a free government of the Ukraine is one that Poland cannot grant, for its acceptance would be followed by similar demands from the other minorities and the disintegration of the Republic. The denial of Ukrainian aspirations, although inevitable so far as present conditions are concerned, has left Poland faced with a hostile and intransigent Ukraine.

As is usual in these circumstances, acts of violence have been committed on both sides. A Ukrainian military organisation, the

Uwo, promoted crimes of sabotage and incendiarism on a widespread scale. Telegraph wires were repeatedly cut, haystacks were fired and raids carried out—in short for some months conditions of guerilla warfare were maintained by the “rebels” against Polish authority.

Despite the fact that *Undo*, the chief Ukrainian party, issued an official warning to the population against the continuance of these excesses “the consequences of which were likely to be serious,” it was evident that the Polish Government was faced with a political problem of grave delicacy, one which would impose a severe strain upon the wisdom and tolerance of the authorities. For while those guilty of crimes had no sense of responsibility to stay their hand—and, indeed, probably regarded their methods of “direct action” as a patriotic duty—the Polish Government had the duty, shared by all Governments, to use the power of repression represented by the Army, police and machinery of officialdom in a humane manner, and in such a way that the innocent should not suffer for the guilty.

The official report of events which occurred during the autumn of 1930, later presented to the Polish Parliament, recognises that the authorities had abundant justification in taking action against individuals.

Unfortunately the Polish Government did not so confine its measures to those whose guilt was proved or even likely. Instead, it mobilised all its forces in order to carry out a “campaign of pacification” against the Ukrainian inhabitants of Eastern Galicia as a whole, as a punishment for the criminal acts of isolated individuals, and with a complete disregard of the fact that the Ukrainian political parties had taken no part in the campaign of violence, but had, on the contrary, repeatedly and expressly protested against this method of exerting pressure to secure the redress of Ukrainian grievances.

Further, the Polish Government’s campaign of “pacification” was marked by a degree of brutality which deserves, and will surely earn for that Government, the censure and horror of the entire civilised world.

“The Polish Terror in the Ukraine is now worse than anything that is happening anywhere else in Europe,” stated a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (October 14, 1930), and few who read what follows will disagree with that verdict.

The first news of this deliberate campaign of terrorism directed against an entire race—men and women, young and old, innocent and guilty alike—to reach Britain was reported in the *Manchester Guardian* in a series of messages published during September and October, 1930 (during the progress of the Polish election).

The campaign consisted of “punitive expeditions” directed not only against whole communities, but particularly against the co-operative creameries and institutes which formed a prominent part in the civilisation and culture of the Ukrainian people.

Let the facts record what occurred when the squadrons of Polish



WRECKED INTERIOR OF THE "SPILNA PRACIA" CO-OPERATIVE STORE AT KADLUBYSKA, EASTERN GALICIA
After the "pacification" of the Polish Ukraine in 1930.

cavalry and the Polish police detachments were let loose upon a defenceless peasantry :

" On September 14, a detachment of the 4th Polish Cavalry Regiment arrived at Hrusiatycze, in the district of Bobrka. Large quantities of grain, vegetables, bread, eggs and milk were requisitioned without payment. At midnight the mayor was ordered to reveal the names of villagers with arms in their possession. He said he knew of none, whereupon he was seized by five soldiers, who gave him fifty strokes with a stick. Eight other villagers were similarly beaten.

" In the night of the 14th, a cavalry detachment at Stary and Nowy Joryczow thrashed some thirty of the villagers with their riding crops. On the 16th, some Polish cavalrymen arrived at the village of Gajda, near Lemberg. On the way there they had caught some peasants who were going to work in the fields and beat them unmercifully. They commandeered a large quantity of food stocks. They caught a number of peasants, men, women and children, and beat each one in turn until the victim lost consciousness. Cold water was then thrown over them, and the beating was sometimes renewed when consciousness returned.

" Iwan Romyszyn and his son and daughter were so beaten that they were left in a dreadful condition, and so were the two children of the mayor of the village. Damian Prus was so roughly handled that his leg was broken. The co-operative store was demolished by the Poles and the storekeeper, a woman, flogged. The windows of the village reading-room were smashed. Similar things were done at Rodberezce, near Lemberg, on the same day. The co-operative store was looted and many of the villagers were beaten—Peter Bubela, a mere boy, was so beaten that his life is in danger.

" In the village of Hurowoe, in the district of Tarnopol, food-stuffs were commandeered, the peasants were beaten, and one of them, Olexa Politacz, was made to run along the village street and shout—' Long live Marshal Pilsudski,' while several cavalrymen ran after him, beating him all the time.

" On the 27th and 28th September, cavalry detachments raided several villages in the district of Grudek Jagiellonski. Ruinous requisitions were made and many peasants were terribly beaten. The following were beaten to death : Olexa Mensals (in the village of Bartatow), Mikolaj Moroz and Stefan Siktasz (in Stawczany), Antoni Szandra (Kiernice), and Hrynko Szmagala (Lubien Wielki).

" On the 22nd and 23rd, detachments of armed foot police invaded the village of Kupczynce (Tarnopol), demolished the co-operative store and the reading-room, and smashed the instruments belonging to the village orchestra. Many of the villagers were beaten. A peasant named Teodor Czajkowski was beaten to

death in the village of Dolzance. On the 23rd the police arrived at Pokropiwna (Tarnopol). Many of the peasants were seized and compelled to kiss 'the Polish soil' and to utter insults about 'Mother Ukraine.' Włodzimierz Kril was so beaten that his life is in danger. Many peasants were so covered with blood and bruises after the beatings that they were hardly recognisable."¹

The same correspondent sent to his paper an extract from a private letter, which gave a vivid picture of what this campaign of terrorism meant in anguish and suffering to those who had the misfortune to incur the wrath of Pilsudski's Government :

"I was going to drive over to the post office on Thursday because I had been hoping I would get a letter from you for a week," ran the letter. "I also wanted to talk to my brother on the telephone about an urgent business matter. . . . The carriage arrived. I took my coat and left the house. It was four in the afternoon. That moment a cart drove up with six strange policemen sitting in it. They jumped down from the cart and asked me—'Are you ——?' I answered 'Yes,' and asked them to step in. Four of them were ordinary policemen, two were police officers. When they entered the room they saw my sporting gun. One of them took it down and asked if I had a licence. I produced my licence, whereupon one of the officers stepped up to me and said 'You ——,' struck me across the face several times, and then caught both my wrists, whereupon the other policemen beat me with sticks. When I collapsed they beat me as I lay on the floor.

"I do not know how long this went on, for I fainted. When I came to, I was wet all over, for they had poured cold water over me. . . . I sat huddled on my bed completely knocked out and saw the six policemen demolish my home. They smashed all the windows, they smashed the stoves in the kitchen and in the living-room, they broke chairs and tables, tore up the books, pulled clothing and linen out of the cupboards and tore them with their bayonets, they cut the cushions and scattered the feathers, my fur coat was completely destroyed. When they had done this they drove off in my own carriage. . . .

"I must have screamed frightfully when I was being beaten, for the peasants in the fields, Poles amongst them, informed the local police, who at once came along. But they never got here, for they met the punitive expedition (that is, the six strange policemen) and after conversing with them for about ten minutes turned back again. Dr. ——, whom I went to see, told me that as long as he had been a doctor he had never seen a man in such a terrible state as I was in."

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, October 14, 1930.

I have quoted from this report at length because it was the first detailed information concerning the "pacification" of the Ukrainians to be received in this country, and also because later events were to confirm the accuracy of every word in that terrible indictment.

The Polish authorities, quite naturally, did not appreciate their actions being thus fully reported, and their Press Bureau in London promptly issued a leaflet, described as "Bulletin No. 1," and entitled *Manchester Guardian's Campaign against Poland and Peace*, for the purpose of refuting the detailed evidence which had appeared in that newspaper.

To this official denial the *Manchester Guardian* replied that it had every confidence in the source of its information. In view of the practice of dictators to deny the authenticity of inconvenient facts, while refusing facilities for independent investigators to examine the evidence in the only place where evidence can be obtained—*i.e.*, in the region concerned—the fact that this Polish official denial speedily proved worthless and was completely refuted by unimpeachable evidence sheds a significant light on the extremes to which even a European Government will go to suppress the truth.

Evidence confirming the *Manchester Guardian* reports was speedily forthcoming. On November 18, while the Polish Press Bureau persisted in its attempts to discredit that newspaper, a correspondent who had recently returned from Eastern Galicia wrote—"I have myself seen quite as much brutality as your special correspondent describes. It happens that one of the villages I visited was Gaje, a few days after it had been 'pacified' by the Uhlans, and his account of conditions there is not exaggerated."

"The Polish police are making every effort to keep exact information from going abroad, arresting and expelling from the country foreigners who are found in the villages. That was my own experience. The punitive expeditions are in the hands of junior officers who have not the sympathy of sober Poles in the neighbourhood. But there is no record of official disapproval of what has been done, but plenty of official denial that there has been any brutality.

"The wanton destruction of co-operative shops, reading-rooms, and the furnishings of all cultural organisations is a serious blow to the Ukrainian peasants, but is of minor importance in comparison with the shameless beatings to which both men and women have been subjected. I saw myself thirty-nine peasants in three villages who had been beaten, and was told that in these villages one had died two days after being beaten, and in another a young man was shot. Polish doctors refuse to attend the injured, and Ukrainian doctors are arrested whenever found ministering to suffering fellow-men. None of the people beaten were given any sort of trial, but apparently they were dealt with indiscriminately, beginning as a

rule with the storekeeper, director of the reading-room, and those best educated and concerned with village welfare.”¹

The writer added that he had been in Poland on holiday, and, becoming aware of what was happening, “had made some personal investigations, with the result that I was imprisoned for twenty-four hours and sent out of the country. My experience shows how extremely difficult it must be to get authentic news of the happenings in Galicia.”

Mr. Jacob Makohin, an American citizen of Boston (Mass.), spent several weeks in Lemberg and the neighbourhood during the period of the terror, “until, on October 24, he was asked to leave the country by the Polish authorities.”

“My enquiries,” stated this witness, “proved that the statements made by the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* are not only not exaggerated, but do not tell half the truth.”

“I can prove,” he said, “that large numbers of people, men, women and children, have been beaten, and that large numbers have been put in prison. I can prove that men have been shot down by Polish commissioned officers and that women have been violated. I can prove that there has been a systematic attempt to destroy the economic, cultural and religious Ukrainian centres. The value of the destroyed property belonging to the Ukrainians runs into millions of *zlotys*. The Ukrainian press has been ruthlessly suppressed. Up to October 24, several hundred villages had been raided by two regiments of cavalry, one regiment of field artillery, one regiment of cavalry sharp-shooters, and by thousands of police imported from Poland.

“The method of these raids was usually as follows: A squadron of 140 or 150 cavalry descends upon a village, usually early in the morning. The entrances and exits are occupied by the local police. Then the cavalry with drawn swords rush through the place. A list of the Ukrainian population has been prepared beforehand, and they are herded up together. The men are stripped naked and given from thirty to two or three hundred lashes. When this is done they compel them to shout ‘Long live Poland!’ or ‘To hell with *Ukrainia*,’ and if they refuse they are beaten again. Search is made for weapons and anti-Government literature. The soldiers go into the farms and split open the bags of grain and so on, and after making a heap of everything, set fire to it with kerosene. Agricultural machinery has been broken, and bayonets poked into the roofs so that they look like sieves. When it is over the people are lined up, and the representatives of the village are told to sign a paper saying that the expedition has been humanely conducted and that all property taken away has been paid for. They are asked to state that they are not Ukrainians and that they

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 20, 1930.

will vote for Pilsudski. In some villages the people were compelled to dress up in their Sunday best and accompany the cavalry outside, and to thank them for the expedition. Photographs were taken of this scene to convince the outside world that the Ukrainians are not being persecuted."¹

Among those who read these reports, and the official Polish denials which followed faithfully upon the publication of each piece of evidence, was Miss Mary Sheepshanks, a daughter of the late Bishop Sheepshanks, and an observer of wide experience and complete impartiality. Miss Sheepshanks was formerly head of Morley College, has been secretary to the "Fight the Famine" organisation, and for several years secretary of the Women's International League at Geneva.

For the purpose of discovering the truth about the terror in the Ukraine—of discovering, indeed, whether the terror really existed and if so what were its dimensions—Miss Sheepshanks set out for Galicia, and there made a special investigation on the spot. Her report was the first considered document prepared by one experienced in such work. In view of its importance as refutation of the Polish Government's denials, and because it is based upon the personal experience of a thoroughly competent witness, I am, with the permission of Miss Sheepshanks, quoting it in full.

"An urgent request was sent to some international parties by the Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia, and especially by the women, to send an independent commission of enquiry to investigate the methods used by the Polish soldiery and police in the 'pacification' carried out during October and up to the elections on November 16," runs this report. "In response to this request, two women, an Austrian and an Englishwoman, recently visited the districts concerned, and, in spite of all the difficulties placed by the authorities in the way of obtaining the information, it was found possible to collect first-hand evidence as to the sufferings inflicted on hundreds of villagers in the districts concerned.

"The Ukrainians or, as the Poles prefer to call them, Ruthenians, number about 4,000,000 in Eastern Galicia, and differ in race and language from the Poles. They have a distinctive culture of their own, and although by religion Roman Catholics, acknowledging and being acknowledged by the Papacy, they have a church of their own, the *Uniat*, which has a liturgy akin to that of the Greek Orthodox. Their Metropolitan Archbishop, Count Szeptychi, a man of great culture and learning, is one of the leading spokesmen of their racial ideals and champion of their civic rights. The pastoral letter in which, in the month of October, he protested against the Polish 'pacification' was suppressed by the authorities.

"The events which led up to the severe repressive measures

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 22, 1930.

ordered by the Polish Government were rick-burnings, carried out, it is stated, by schoolboys going through the country on bicycles. Instead of punishing the culprits it was decided to terrorise the whole population. The Ukrainians themselves believe that the repressive measures were ordered not in consequence of the firing of crops, but in order to terrorise the population into voting for the Government list at the elections.

"The investigation of all these events is very difficult owing to the following ordinances :

"Paragraph 1. Article 1.—Whoever intentionally gives such information or documents or puts other objects at the disposal of strangers, which in the interest of the Polish State should be kept secret from the Governments of foreign States, is liable to a punishment of five years' imprisonment.

"Paragraph 1. Article 3.—Whoever intentionally, or without authorisation collects information and documents, or other material which are mentioned in Article 1, or whoever attempts to obtain possession or to get information of such things, is liable to a punishment of three years' imprisonment."

"Many persons are now in prison for mere possession of information with regard to damage done to persons and property. Houses are frequently searched by police, and the population is so thoroughly terrorised and in such actual danger of further reprisals that few will venture to make a statement that may lead to further floggings and imprisonment.

"Nevertheless, it was found possible to interview a number of peasants and workmen from different villages, who were still suffering from the frightful beatings inflicted on them two months ago. In each case the general plan followed was similar, and showed clearly that it was ordered from headquarters. In some cases the attack on the village was made by cavalry, in others by police squads ; the time chosen was generally night : the village was surrounded, machine-guns set up. Some soldiers were detailed to levy contributions in live stock, grain and sometimes cash from each household. Others forced the villagers to wreck their reading-room, library and co-operative store, and for these operations they were not allowed tools but had to use their hands, which were often torn and bleeding, in fact used to the bone. They were then made to sign a declaration that they had carried out the demolition of their own free will.

"A third detachment rounded up the leading men of the village, especially the keeper of the co-operative store, the custodian of the reading-room and the others, including the schoolmaster and the priest. These men were then driven into a barn, stripped, held down, and beaten with thick sticks used for threshing. The beating was continued until the men lost consciousness ; they then had cold water poured over them and the beating was resumed. Very often

200 or 300 blows were inflicted so that the flesh was horribly torn, and in the case of the men, we saw the wounds were still unhealed and raw after two months. In many cases bones were broken, in some cases death ensued. A woman from one of the villages told us how she had seen the beatings carried out, and how one young man who was being pressed to acknowledge that he had arms hidden, at last in frantic pain, said, in order to stop the flogging, that he had a gun hidden in his roof. The soldiers then went to look for it and not finding it (it had never existed) they beat him to death.

"This woman also told us how she saw a man dragged, after beating, along the roads, tied to the motor-car of the officers. Women of the villages were forced by the soldiers to dress in their festal clothes, to provide wine and wait on the troops, and then to accompany them to the next village. Meanwhile the beaten men, bleeding and fainting, were thrown into a cellar, where they were left for twenty-four hours without attention to their wounds, and even without a drink of water.

"In some cases women, children and very old men were flogged. We saw a boy of thirteen, whose leg was broken by the soldiers, and the bone was so injured and inflamed that it will not heal. We saw also a man of sixty-three who had been ill for ten weeks as a result of his beating.

"One terrible feature of the whole procedure was the refusal of medical treatment to the victims. Doctors were forbidden to go out of the towns to the villages, and peasants attempting to come into the towns for treatment were turned back by the police. In many cases the wounds have gangrened, and either death or lifelong injury has resulted. As is inevitable when a helpless peasantry is handed over to armed soldiers and police to do as they like, numerous excesses of all kinds have occurred. A priest, Mandziy, after receiving two hundred blows on the back and having water thrown over him, was then turned over and the police stamped on his chest and beat him on the belly and legs; in his agony he begged to be shot. The police were at the time cooking their meal near by; they took the boiling food and threw it over his wounds. Shortly after this his death was announced in the Polish press, but, unfortunately for himself, he still lingers on in torture. His sister, who lived with him, was then beaten and his house broken up.

"In another village there was a Jewish doctor who wished to dress the wounds, but was forbidden to do so. The Polish hospitals have refused to take in victims, and in many cases the local doctors have fled for fear of arrest, as several doctors found dressing wounds of the victims were imprisoned.

"Evidence in support of this statement was given to us by doctors, and a list is in our possession of cases of wounds with names, age and village of the victims. These include cases of necrosis, hemorrhage, broken ear-drums caused by blows on the head, and gangrene.

" In order to prevent medical reports being drawn up, the houses of Ukrainian doctors in the towns were searched by the police ; even the jam-pots and children's toy-cupboards being searched for documents or photographs. Lawyers, too, were forbidden to take any action in defence of their clients. A number of persons injured, and whose property had been pillaged and looted by soldiers and police, addressed themselves to lawyers in Tarnopol. For merely taking down statements of their clients' cases they were seized by the police, who searched their houses. Five lawyers were imprisoned. In one case the wife, who acted as her husband's secretary, had helped in drawing up the statement. She was taken to the police-station, stripped in front of the police, and imprisoned in various prisons for two months, then in despair and misery, she refused all food, and was finally released.

" In another case the wife of a priest who was severely ill was told by the police to get up, and on being unable to do so was dragged from her bed and beaten until insensible. Her two daughters, aged thirteen and seventeen, were similarly beaten.

" Besides damage to persons, immense damage has been done to property. The priest's house in many cases has been wrecked, the furniture and books destroyed. The village reading-rooms, libraries and co-operative stores have been systematically destroyed. . . .

" After these raids had continued for some time, the inhabitants, on hearing that troops were approaching their village, fled into the woods and remained in hiding for many days, in some cases for weeks. In some villages the troops took the roofs from their houses or forced the peasants to destroy their roofs ; the windows were broken wholesale, stoves damaged, agricultural machines, sewing machines and other apparatus broken up. In some cases wells were befouled and the drinking water supply destroyed.

" Naturally, as in all such cases, there were attacks on women. We possess the names of persons and of villages who were mistreated in various ways, and we possess signed statements as to the damage done.

" Evidence was also confirmed by other eye-witnesses of the events, women belonging to various women's organisations, by lawyers, deputies, doctors and clergy, in particular by bishops, who have so far been immune from personal violence, and who are in close touch with their clergy and with the inhabitants.

" Several points must be emphasised : that this so-called pacification has been carried out with a ferocity which can only be compared to the previous atrocities carried out in the early nineteenth century by the Bashibazouks in the old Turkish territories, and, secondly, that these atrocities were not punishments inflicted for crime, but were inflicted without trial and wholesale on an entire population. Thirdly, that they were done by command of the Government and were carried out strictly according to plan and were not merely the

excesses of subordinates. Fourthly, that the victims were denied all medical assistance. Fifthly, that every effort has been made to prevent the drawing up of any reports or statistics showing the extent of the repression. The number of villages thus treated was between 500 and 800. It cannot be stated with exactitude how many peasants and workmen were flogged, but it certainly runs into hundreds, and perhaps several thousands. Imprisonments have also been carried out on a great scale, and when the prisons were full, the barracks and other buildings were requisitioned.

"If, as is stated by the Polish apologists, this whole affair has been much exaggerated, it is a matter for surprise that they resist the attempts to ascertain the exact facts."

Such is the truth concerning Pilsudski's "pacification" of the Ukrainians, which was Poland's answer to the demand by the inhabitants of Eastern Galicia for the right to use and teach their own language, and to develop their own economic life in accordance with their own standard of culture and civilisation—a very high standard.

Further details of this campaign of terrorism have since become known. About forty priests were arrested and imprisoned, under obviously unfounded charges which made any court proceedings against them impossible. After some weeks in custody, all were released. Similarly, a number of Ukrainian deputies were arrested, together with the whole executive committee of the chief Ukrainian political party; some of these were released after a short imprisonment, but the president, secretary and a handful of members of the party were still held in prison eight months later, no charges having been brought against them. This continued imprisonment of men without trial is contrary to Polish law.

Of those beaten and otherwise ill-treated during the "pacification," about forty died of their wounds during the months immediately following the outrages, while in July, 1931, numbers of the injured were still suffering so seriously from gangrene and other complications, due to the absence of medical attention following the assaults, that their lives were despaired of.

Yet another aspect of the martyrdom of the Ukrainian people is the refusal of the Polish Government to permit the education of Ukrainian children in their national schools. A number of Ukrainian secondary schools were forcibly closed during the campaign, and the pupils forbidden to attend any other school where the Ukrainian language is used. Further, these pupils were informed that they might only attend a Polish school outside the district of their former school, and then only after obtaining a certificate from the police that they were not "politically suspect." The teachers on the staffs of the suppressed Ukrainian schools have either been dismissed or pensioned, and the Polish authorities continue to turn a deaf ear to all petitions, whether from parents or Ukrainian organisations, asking that the ban upon the national schools shall be withdrawn.

The Ukrainians, whose national aspirations are "protected" by solemn treaties by which the Polish Government is bound, may not even sing their national anthem. By a decision of the *Wojewodztwo* of Tarnopol, the singing of this anthem has become a criminal offence within a wide district. Nor were these instances of petty persecution confined to the period of the "pacification"; the suppression still continues.

Protesting against the "pacification" campaign on behalf of their people, the Committee of the United Ukrainian Emigrant Organisations published a protest to the world, which was also signed by a representative of the Ukrainian Socialist Party.

This appeal, dated October 20, 1930, declared :

"Since the dissolution of the Polish Parliament the Government has arrested 25 out of the 57 Ukrainian deputies for alleged subversive intrigues. On the orders of the Polish Government, systematic *pogroms* against the population have been carried out in all the Ukrainian districts since the beginning of September.

"The Polish punitive expeditions, soldiers and police, pass from town to town, and from village to village, and terrorise the whole population, ill-treat them to the point of insensibility, murder them, leave them to drown, beat and violate the Ukrainian women, and even murder sick people and children. They destroy Ukrainian schools, monuments, libraries, co-operative societies and cultural organisations. They rob and destroy Ukrainian property. The inhuman and sadistic ill-treatment is directed to a quite special degree against the active citizens of Ukrainian nationality, the scholars in Ukrainian schools, students, teachers, doctors, lawyers and Ukrainian ministers of religion. Thousands of Ukrainian towns and villages within the frontiers of Poland are swimming in blood and tears, and echoing with the cries of the ill-treated and injured, who are even refused medical aid on the orders of the Polish authorities. The inhuman atrocities of the Pilsudski régime are fully comparable with the bloody deeds of the Bolsheviks.

"We appeal to the Governments of the Great Powers, with whose consent the Ukrainian districts were given to Poland, and who thereby assumed the political and moral duty to watch over the fortunes of the Ukrainians in Poland."

The campaign of terrorism conducted against this people was debated in the Polish Parliament at the end of January, 1930, on a motion raised not by Socialists or the Left, but by the Right-wing Opposition—the so-called reactionary National Democratic Party.

Speaking on this motion Dubios, one of the Socialist Deputies who was imprisoned in Brest-Litovsk fortress, and who was one of the few who passed through that experience to return to the *Sejm* with their spirits unbroken, declared : "If Poland is to be called a



A DAMAGED CO-OPERATIVE STORE AT LEMBERG, POLISH UKRAINE, AFTER
BOMBING BY POLES DURING THE "PACIFICATION"

civilised state then it cannot tolerate collective punishment for the deeds of individual persons."

Replying on behalf of the Government, General Skladkowski, the Minister of the Interior, declared that much of the data relating to the atrocities in the Ukraine was based upon forged evidence, but he admitted that some excesses had occurred, and stated that those responsible had been punished. When pressed to give the names of those police officers or soldiers who had been punished, he was unable to give any instances. With an absolute majority for Pilsudski in the *Sejm*, gained at the last elections, it is unnecessary to add that the motion of censure upon the Government was defeated.

Apparently the Polish Government had decided that the risk of the Ukrainian Terror driving the inhabitants of the Polish Ukraine into open collusion with the forces of Communism across the Russian frontier was preferable to the loss of prestige which they would suffer in the eyes of the civilised world if it permitted the full story of the martyrdom of the Ukraine to be debated in Parliament.

That terrible excesses occurred it is no longer possible to deny, and one may be pardoned for imagining that in this "pacification" the Polish Government had done its worst towards a defenceless subject people.

Unhappily the exposure of wholesale terrorism in the villages of Ukrainia does not end the story of the sufferings of its people.

After the Uhlans and police had retreated from the villages they had devastated, many hundreds of Ukrainians remained in prison without trial and without knowing the charges brought against them.

A number of these prisoners, among them some alleged by the Poles to be Communists, and several who were mere boys and girls, were confined in the prison at Luck, in Volhynia. The end of the organised terrorism in the Ukraine did not bring these "political" prisoners release. They remained shut off not only from the outside world, but from their own people. And then, early in 1931, came accusations, supported by reliable and detailed evidence, of atrocities committed upon helpless prisoners behind the walls of the prison at Luck, not only worse than the treatment of the imprisoned deputies at Brest-Litovsk and even the Ukrainian Terror, but surpassing in their stark horror and sadistic cruelty anything which has occurred in Europe during the twentieth century.

Details of these atrocities were revealed during a debate in the Polish Senate, when a Socialist Senator read out a long statement of the maltreatments inflicted upon the political prisoners.

This statement declared that the women prisoners confined there were repeatedly and brutally violated by the staff of the prison; that, further, with the object of extorting confessions, water mixed with filth was squirted through the mouth and nose of the male prisoners, and that both men and women prisoners were subjected to electric shocks applied with revolting cruelty.

In a letter sent by a woman inmate of this prison, a terrible picture was given of the methods used by Zaremba, the Chief of Police, and his subordinates, to wring confessions of guilt from the captives :

" We were tortured in the most unspeakable fashion. The men were beaten with rubber cudgels on their sexual organs and remain permanently disabled. . . . The girls were violated. I was twice violated ; they stripped me completely, poured a five-gallon jug of water down my nose, two or three streams of water at a time, while inflicting fifty to a hundred strokes apiece on my heels with a rubber cudgel. They continued this treatment until people confessed. . . . One of the prisoners was murdered and his body thrown into the Styr. His name was Stepan Boiko. A report that he escaped was circulated. In view of the tortures inflicted on numbers of the victims, Nina Matul attempted suicide by opening her veins ; she is now in the prison at Luck. Jan Kosar had his kidneys beaten to the point of mutilation. Bolawka had his heels so maltreated that two malignant abscesses formed on them, and he had to undergo an operation. In short, we were reduced to living corpses.

" The outrages upon me were committed by Police Commissioner Tkaczuk and ' Vladja ' Postovicz. It was on November 25, at eleven or twelve at night. After various insults they stripped me naked, ordered me to sit on the ground, bound my hands and feet together and passed a stick through them. In this position they blindfolded my eyes with a cloth, then both lifted me on to a table and violated me."

It is unnecessary to add further details ; the hope that these unspeakable barbarities had been exaggerated by prisoners who were Communists and quasi-Communists, was shattered by the tacit admission of the Polish Government that the facts could no longer be concealed—an admission which took the form of an announcement by General Skladkowski, that " there had been some irregularities at Luck," and that the responsible prison officials there had been dismissed. The fact that they were dismissed at a moment's notice suggests that the evidence which has reached the outside world of this worst horror of all was not as exaggerated as the Polish Government would like other nations to believe.

HUNGARY

CHAPTER XXII

THE WHITE TERROR

"It is not our aim to promote the interests of any one class of society and to favour its rule over other classes; our intention is to lay, in accordance with the social order of the Western nations, the firm foundation of general prosperity, and by a steadfastly pursued course of necessary social reforms to satisfy all the fair and just demands of the working classes.

"We regard all ordinances of the Budapest Soviet government as invalid; and we intend to be, in every field of our activity, the banner-bearers of liberty, democracy and progress."

COUNT JULIUS KAROLYI,

Prime Minister of the National Government of Hungary,
in a proclamation issued at Szeged, May 31, 1919.

IN twelve years Hungary has passed from feudalism to Red Terror; from Red Terror to White, and from White Terror back to feudalism, camouflaged in the garments of a parliamentary régime which looks back over that blood-stained circle to Bela Kun's short-lived Soviet government at Buda-Pest for justification of its thinly-veiled dictatorship, accompanied by "rigged" elections, political victimisation, press censorship and the complete denial of free speech.

The pattern of Admiral Horthy's régime in Hungary was drawn in fear—fear of Bolshevism. And those who are conversant with the tide of events in Hungary during the days of the Soviet dictatorship, while disappointed that a more liberal policy has not been adopted, will understand that fear.

In the history of revolution and reaction in Europe since 1918 the bloodiest figure of all is that of Bela Kun, Commissar of Foreign Affairs in the proletarian dictatorship set up at Buda-Pest in March, 1919.

This supreme butcher in the history of Communism organised the *pogroms* in the Crimea following the evacuation of the White Russian troops from that region—and how many tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children were slaughtered in that holocaust will never be known. And the "Workers' Government" in Hungary, of which he was a leading member, was so faithful to the Bolshevik pattern, both in its decrees and in its actions, that in the end its downfall was due to the antagonism of the Hungarian workers themselves, quite as much as to the activities of the rival "National" Government set up by Count Karolyi and assisted by Rumanian troops.

There is no need here to relate the story of the Red Terror in Hungary. The facts are known to all students of European history.

That Terror was mob-rule without a vestige of principle or idealism. Gangs of terrorists occupied some of the main buildings of Buda-Pest and murdered for sheer lust of killing. At one time it seemed probable that the Danube would be the grave of many of the best of the Hungarian nation. If "nothing is gained except by violence," as Lenin declared, then the Bela Kun dictatorship should be in power to-day.

In the days before its fall, the Terror was intensified. More important than even the creation of a Red Army to oppose the invading Rumanians and Czechs, was the task of exterminating the *bourgeoisie*.

"The thing to do," declared John Surek, a member of the Buda-Pest Working Men's Council, "is to make hostages of all *bourgeois* citizens and to send an ultimatum to the *Entente* declaring that we shall kill every one of them unless they stop their march on Buda-Pest. This must be done in the course of the night. All the *bourgeois* must be killed, this is the beginning and end of my speech, otherwise we cannot hold Buda-Pest."¹

Although this proposed wholesale *pogrom* was shelved by the Workers' Council, many of the *bourgeoisie* died during the following days.

"Louis de Navay, ex-President of the Hungarian Chamber, had been a politician of repute and a true liberal at heart all his days. A person of extensive culture and of a retiring, contemplative disposition, his modesty and humanity had endeared him to all who knew him. It might have been thought that such a man, if anyone, would escape the fury of the mob. But it was not so. Dragged from his country place to be taken to Buda-Pest as a hostage, he and two other companions in misfortune were forced to leave the train at a wayside station and marched to an adjacent field where, after being made to dig their own graves, they were stabbed with knife-thrusts and shot down. Two of the unfortunate men died at once, but eye-witnesses maintain that Navay himself was still alive when he was buried."²

Two citizens named Hollans, father and son, were arrested as hostages, dragged from the lorry in which they were travelling to prison when on the suspension bridge which crosses the Danube between Pest and Buda, and there shot and their bodies flung into the river.

Outside the city, in the districts controlled by the Bela Kun Government, it was the same; whole regions were reduced by terrorism to a state of cowering horror. Whenever Szamuely (the Terrorist entrusted with the work of destroying the *bourgeoisie*) found it impossible to fasten the guilt of any suspected action against the Government upon specific persons "he ordered the first man he met to be hanged on a tree so as not to have his journey in vain."

The Bela Kun Government disappeared from the world's stage. After revolution came reaction. The hunting of the *bourgeoisie* by the Red Terrorists ceased; the hunting of all suspected of Communist or Socialist sympathies by the White Terrorists began.

The Hungarian counter-revolution of 1919-1920 differed from most other swings to reaction in that, while in the course of less than

¹ *Bolshevism in Hungary*, by Baron Albert Kaas and Fedor Lazarovics (London. Grant Richards). To this excellent account of the Bela Kun régime I refer the reader who wishes further details.

² *Bolshevism in Hungary*, p. 156.



BORIS SAVINKOV (MARKED WITH X) GIVING EVIDENCE DURING HIS TRIAL AT MOSCOW FOLLOWING HIS
VOLUNTARY SURRENDER TO HIS SOVIET ENEMIES



BELA KUN, HEAD OF THE SHORT-LIVED COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RED TERROR IN HUNGARY

two years more than two thousand persons were killed by the officers of the new National Government, no justification for this White Terror existed. During the whole course of this terrorist campaign Hungary was completely peaceful and orderly, desiring only tranquillity after the bloody régime under which it had suffered.

Despite the fact that police, militia and courts were functioning normally, the troops of Admiral Nicholas Horthy, commander-in-chief of the Army supporting the "National" Government, repossessing the country in the wake of the invading Rumanians, arrested and imprisoned, often without trial, over 70,000 workers and peasants, while tens of thousands fled across the frontiers before the oncoming terror.

What fear cost Hungary in blood and pain during those opening days of the Horthy régime has been placed upon record by a British Joint Labour Delegation which investigated the White Terror in Hungary during May, 1920. This delegation consisted of Colonel Wedgewood, M.P., and four prominent members of the British Labour Party: Messrs F. W. Jowett, W. Harris, Stuart Bunning and J. B. Williams. Upon their return the delegation reported that "in view of the evidence supplied to us, we believe that there is a Terror in Hungary, that the Hungarian Government is unable to control it, and that many of its own acts are of so rigorous a character as to merit the name of 'Terror.'"

A few extracts from the evidence compiled by this group of trained observers will be sufficient to convince the reader of the moderation of that judgment.

Perhaps the most terrible case which the delegation placed upon record concerned a Mrs. Hamburger, whose husband was a refugee in Vienna, as was also her brother-in-law, a known Communist and ex-Commissar. The husband sent a letter to his wife in Buda-Pest by a youth named Vadas. This messenger was caught by the military, one of whom delivered the letter to Mrs. Hamburger, pretending to be the messenger by whom it had been sent. This military *agent provocateur* urged Mrs. Hamburger to get her friends together at a later hour, so that he could give them full details as to how they could escape to Vienna.

Later the same day five people—Mrs. Hamburger, her brother, her brother-in-law, a Jew named Neumann and a Hungarian—(one the General Secretary of the Railwaymen's Union), awaited the return of the supposed messenger.

At the hour named, came not the camouflaged messenger, but troops, who arrested them and took them to the Kalenfold Barracks. What happened in that prison-house is here reproduced in the words of the British delegation :

"At the Kalenfold they were put into a room together, but in the evening Mrs. Hamburger was taken into another room where

there were many officers, amongst them being Lieutenants Hejjas, Bibo and Sefscik. She knew their names because Lieutenant Hejjas stated to her that he wanted her to know that she was in the hands of Lieutenant Hejjas ; asked her did she know who Lieutenant Hejjas was, and added : ' You will learn a few things about him.' Three of the officers who had whips beat Mrs. Hamburger with them severely and ordered her to strip. She refused, when she was beaten again and again until she finally gave way and stripped. When naked she was again beaten. An order was then given that one of the four prisoners should be brought up, adding that the one brought should not be a relation of Mrs. Hamburger. They brought up Bela Neumann. He was commanded to rape Mrs. Hamburger. He refused, saying he was an old friend of Mr. and Mrs. Hamburger. They beat him unmercifully, but he still refused. Then two officers, whose names are unknown but who came from Temesvar, took pincers and pulled out Neumann's teeth. He fainted, when they splashed water over him ; and on his reviving they forced him to lick up his blood. Mrs. Hamburger fainted two or three times, but was each time revived by douches of cold water. She says the officers were not drunk. Finally, before the eyes of Mrs. Hamburger, they castrated him with a pocket knife. Neumann was then carried away. Another man was then brought up (not one of the three friends). They stripped him, when Mrs. Hamburger observed that he had been maltreated and one of his genital organs crushed in some way. He too was ordered to violate her. He was physically unable to do so, but the officers forced him to make advances to her. Next they ordered Mrs. Hamburger to sit naked on a hot stove, but she made such piteous appeals to them that they did not insist on this."

(Here follows a passage which is unfit to print outside the pages of an official report.)

" After this she was ordered to dress, and taken back to the other three. About an hour later she was taken to where the officers and a large number of soldiers were in another room. Before this crowd she was again whipped and forced to strip. While the soldiers sang, she was forced to dance under the lash with various soldiers in turn. None of the soldiers behaved brutally towards her. The dancing lasted about an hour and then she was allowed to dress again.

" She remained in Kalenfold five weeks—two weeks on straw on the floor with twelve or fourteen others. This cellar was about fifteen-feet square with a low ceiling : no washing, no change of clothes, no medical attendance. An armed guard was with them and the soldiers helped them out of their own food. She became very ill and for the last three weeks she was in a cell by herself. About February 23, she and her three friends were taken in an auto

to Kecskemet to the police prison. When asked by the magistrate why they had been brought there, young Hejjas, who was in charge, said that they had been guilty of smuggling 2,400,000 crowns. Next day Mrs. Hamburger was taken to the Royal prison at Buda-Pest where she remained until April 19, when she was released. On her discharge, which we have seen, Mrs. Hamburger is charged with 'Bolshevik activities.'"¹

The five members of the British Labour Party who placed upon record this terrible story add : " Mrs. Hamburger is a quiet, unassuming, and a highly respected woman, and we were informed by all who knew her that she possessed a moral character beyond reproach. No charge was made against her ; there has been no semblance of a trial. She was taken away by the military, tortured in an infamous manner, and finally released by the civil authorities."

Another case investigated by the delegation concerned the treatment suffered by M. N., a draughtsman of Marczali, who, both before and during the Bela Kun régime, was employed in the Ministry of Agriculture at Buda-Pest. The report states of " M. N." :

" Was arrested August 6, 1919. When first arrested was treated quite well, as there were no White officers there then. After three days an officers' detachment came to Marczali. On or about August 26, seventy prisoners were placed in the courtyard in rows. A list of seventeen names were then read out, and four Jews placed on one side and thirteen Christians on the other. One man who had been a ' red ' soldier was taken from the Christian group. He was knocked down and jumped and trampled on till he was disembowelled. The name of the man was Franz Osz. He died a little later.

" A teacher was also taken from the thirteen named Johann Krenusz and beaten.

" Then they took a Catholic priest, whom they beat. This priest was so beloved that a petition was presented for his release by his parishioners. In front of the other prisoners the hair of the priest was torn out. They gouged out one of his eyes and stabbed him with bayonets."

(Here follows a passage which cannot be printed.)

" After the above torture was concluded, the rest were given a hundred strokes each with sticks. Then the seventeen, including the corpse of Osz, were hanged on a large tree in the court-yard. M. N. and two others saw the seventeen corpses from their cell window.

" The Governor of the prison protested against the hanging, but Captain Pronay threatened the Governor of the prison for his

¹ *The White Terror in Hungary.* Trade Union Congress and Labour Party, 1920, p. 9.

interference, and fear of the consequences caused him to cease his protests.

"M. N. some days later received 108 strokes. He was held down by two soldiers and thrashed by four with sticks and whips.

"Captain Pronay was present, and when the head of M. N. drooped through the suffering he endured, the captain clouted him on the head to revive him. M. N. was so injured he had to go to hospital a few days later. He stayed there from September 3 till the 13th.

"... On September 13, M. N. got his discharge from hospital, and on September 15 he was given his official discharge from prison. We have seen the originals of the certificates. The prison discharge stated that the persecution against him is dropped and '*having served his sentence*' he is hereby released."

A Hungarian who had commanded an armoured train with the Communist forces was beaten about the head so severely while in prison that "it bled and swelled up like a big ball."

A Jewess, arrested at Buda-Pest as a Communist, was three times violated in her cell at the police station by an officer who had previously sent her in special food for a week in an effort to make her his willing mistress. This girl escaped to Vienna on January 13, 1920, in which city she gave birth to a child of which the officer was the father.

One of the most dreaded prisons at that time was the notorious Hajmasker Camp. The British Labour Delegation secured evidence of conditions in this camp from a prisoner who had been confined there for two months :

"His description of Hajmasker was that the food was vile and impossible to live on ; that relations must bring food or they would be dead, but that it took two days for their relations to get to them and back ; that they were covered with lice ; that horrible old military punishments were used, such as hanging men by their thumbs, and brutal beatings. When he left he said there were 1,700 men there and 70 or 80 women. He was not there when the High Commissioner went round the camp ; but he stated that only tuberculosis patients or syphilitics were sent to the hospital ; and that other cases and all those that the authorities wanted to hide were sent to the barracks 23 and 24, and not to hospital. He said that there were about 200 Russians and Austrians and other foreigners there, and that as they got no food from outside their case was particularly pitiable."

This man had been arrested by soldiers on January 25, 1920, taken to the Palast Hotel and imprisoned with twenty-seven others in one small room. There they were beaten every day, particularly the Jews, and they received no food, save what their families brought to them. He had two teeth knocked out.

On February 5, he and nine others were taken by train to the Hajmasker. He was set apart as a Christian, and all the way the nine Jews were tortured, hands bound and wire round their throats so that they sometimes fainted from strangulation. Early in April he was taken to the Marco Gasse prison in Buda-Pest. There he was well treated until April 19, when *gendarmes* replaced the ordinary police warders. On May 7, he was released as innocent. It is interesting to note that until he reached the Marco Gasse prison no one has even asked his name, much less laid any charge against him. When released he was still oblivious of the "crime" for which he had suffered at the hands of the White Terror.

During the months that followed the fall of the Bela Kun dictatorship 27,000 persons were accused of being Communists and some 6000 arrested and imprisoned without trial. This latter total does not include those interned or imprisoned by the marauding gangs of White officers, who were responsible for many of the most terrible incidents recorded above.

The British delegation estimated that, at that time (March, 1920), there were at least 12,000 persons interned or in prison, and they added: "It is admitted that many of them have been in prison for months awaiting trial, and the overcrowding of the prisons may be judged from the instance of Szolnok, which two of our party visited. We were informed by the Governor . . . that he was helpless, as he had 350 prisoners in a prison intended for 50."

These British investigators, upon their return, declared, "In endeavouring to fix responsibility for the 'Terror' in Hungary: it is necessary to remember that the country has passed through five years of war and through several revolutions and counter-revolutions. Members of the Government expressed fears of a Communist rising, and there is also the party of the 'Awakening Hungarians' which is said to number a million adherents. . . . We do not think that either the Governor or the Government by themselves are strong enough to put matters right. We do not accuse them of complicity in the outrages, although it was astounding to us that the Government should profess admiration for officers like Hejjas and Pronay, against whom such terrible charges are made, and should brush aside any suggestion of proper enquiry."

Among those in Hungary who protested against this campaign of wholesale terrorism was the Hungarian National Government itself, a deputation of the leaders of which, including Count Julius Andrássy, formerly Foreign Minister under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Josef Karolyi, and Stefan Bethlen, the present Prime Minister, approached Admiral Horthy and urged him to take steps to stop the criminal activities of his officers.

Horthy was indignant at this "libel" upon his army and refused to take any action. He added, further, that when his troops entered Buda-Pest (the capital was then in the hands of the Rumanians), "some

people would swim." (To "swim" in Hungarian slang means to swim in the Danube as a corpse).

The Admiral then took from a drawer a newspaper article written by a well-known Socialist journalist, Bela Samogyi, editor of the *Nepszava* newspaper, in which the cruelties of the officer bands were described, and said: "Those who write such articles as this shall swim."

Samogyi continued to protest against the barbarities of those days in *Nepszava* in a series of articles which he had necessarily to communicate to the censor day by day before publication. Nor did he cease to write his protests against reaction when Admiral Horthy and his troops entered Buda-Pest and the Terror came to that city.

So experienced a journalist must have known the fate that awaited him. If Samogyi did know, he never flinched. At the beginning of February, 1920, he submitted to the censors an article, publication of which was prohibited. The censor sent a copy of this banned article to the Gerhardus Hotel, Admiral Horthy's headquarters, where it was considered by a company of officers presided over by the Admiral himself. The article aroused great indignation, and a member of the company remarked: "It is really high time to throw this rascal Samogyi into the Danube." Admiral Horthy is reported to have answered: "There has been enough talk—now at last we must act." And action was taken.

At eight o'clock in the evening of February 17, Samogyi and Bela Bacso, a young poet, were stopped by officers of the Ostenburg White Detachment and requested to follow them to the military headquarters. They entered a motor-car which was driven, not to the town command, but to the Danube meadows.

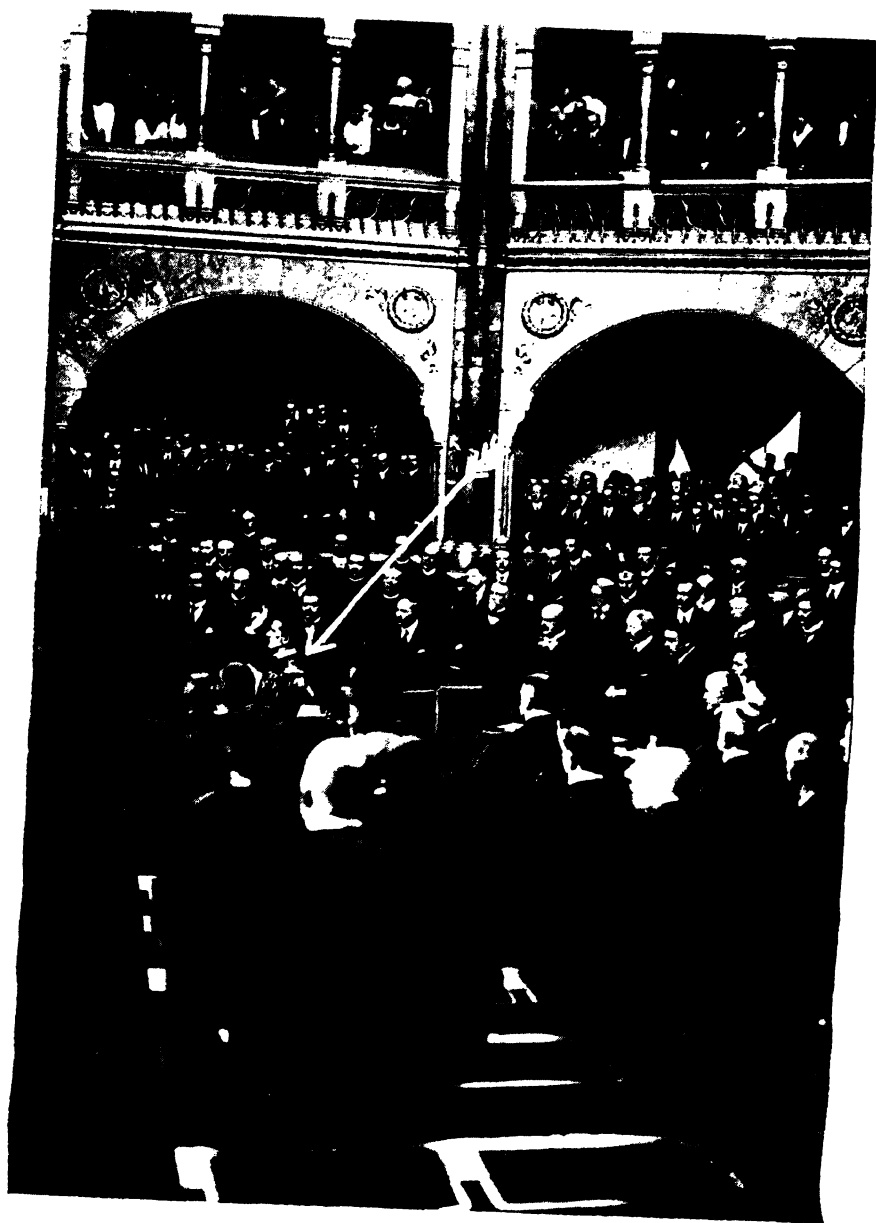
The drive was interrupted by a *contretemps* which assisted to place the responsibility for the crime that followed upon the right shoulders. As the car passed swiftly along the Neupesterstrasse, a policeman who noticed that it had no lights called upon the driver to stop. The *chauffeur*, Captain Kovarcz, drove on, whereupon the patrolman shot at them and brought the car to a standstill.

There was an angry exchange of words between Kovarcz and the man, and the car continued its journey.

Arriving at the Danube meadows, Samogyi and the poet Bacso were murdered with the utmost ferocity. First they were wounded with bayonet stabs—more than ten wounds were afterwards discovered on Samogyi's corpse alone—their eyes were cut out, and only then was the death shot given to end their sufferings.

The bodies were robbed of gold watches, wallets and purses and then flung into the river.

This inspired and brutal double murder, carried out against an innocent man and a journalist whose only crime had been to write the truth concerning the White Terror, had unpleasant repercussions for the Hungarian Government, which was at that time engaged in peace negotiations with the *Entente* powers. In these circumstances



ADMIRAL HORTHY BEING ELECTED REGENT OF THE HUNGARIAN STATE
AT BUDA-PEST, FOLLOWING THE OVERTHROW OF THE "PROLETARIAN
DICTATORSHIP"

Huszar, Prime Minister, promised in the Hungarian Chamber to institute a strict investigation and to bring those guilty to justice.

The task of the Hungarian police was not difficult. A few hours sufficed for them to trace the culprits and establish the facts of the crime. It was proved that the murder gang—First-Lieutenant Soltesz, Captain Kovarcz and Lieutenant Megay—had driven Samogyi and Bacso away in Car No. III 36 of the Army High Command. The car was recovered the same day and in it was found the blood-stained trousers worn by Megay. Samogyi's gold watch was discovered in the possession of Lieutenant Soltesz.

The Government police found the murderers—but nobody was arrested; the reason, it was openly hinted at the time, being that Admiral Horthy had extended his protection to the criminals lest further revelations should expose those who had instigated the crime. Whatever the reason for the inaction of the police, the Army High Command took swift action to prevent further investigation of the affair. The confiscated car was removed from the possession of the police, all documents were taken over by the military, and the Army Command substituted a military investigation of the murder for the police enquiry thus forcibly abandoned. This military enquiry was placed in the hands of First-Lieutenant Sefcsik, an officer who had shortly before himself murdered an official of the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party named Cservenka.

Four years later, Edmund Beniczky, who was Minister of the Interior at the time of the crime, admitted that the police had discovered the murderers but had been unable to arrest them as they had acted in obedience to Horthy's direct orders.

This statement was made in the course of a ten-year-long fight for justice waged by the Hungarian Socialists—a fight which still continues to-day.

After many futile debates in the Hungarian Parliament, the party to which Samogyi belonged have repeatedly attempted to raise the case before the Courts. And the Courts postponed the proceedings again and again on various pretexts. At last, at the end of 1930, the Hungarian Court gave a decision that the murderers of Samogyi and Bacso are covered by the amnesty of 1921—a decision given despite repeated promises of the Hungarian Government, made since that date, to avenge the murder.

While many alleged Socialists and Communists, arrested during the Terror, remain incarcerated in the prisons of Hungary and unaffected by the 1921 "act of clemency," Captain Soltesz, one of the three members of the murder gang, was until recently employed at the Ministry of War at Buda-Pest, while another—Kovarcz—was in 1930 still an active and unmolested member of the corps of officers of the Hungarian militia!

Nor did the second amnesty, proclaimed to mark the tenth anniversary of Admiral Horthy's régime in March, 1930, open the prison

doors to those imprisoned for their political opinions. A demand in the Hungarian Chamber for a general political amnesty was rejected by Count Bethlen, the Prime Minister, who added a reference to the danger of Bolshevism.

The opportunity to remove the last lingering evidence of the White Terror passed. The amnesty was confined to the offence of insulting the person of the Regent and to minor misdemeanours punishable with not more than six months' imprisonment. All those whose only crime was to hold political views distasteful to the Horthy Government and forces, and to take a political part in the events of the revolutionary period, remain in their cells.

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Those who have watched the refashioning, within the difficult limits imposed by the Treaty of Trianon, of a new Hungary will not deny the great achievements of the past ten years. Achievements which have carried the Hungarian nation from chaos and dissolution to its present ordered finances and government.

Impressive as is the achievement it might have been more outstanding had the Horthy régime not been afraid of democracy; had the Government introduced the secret ballot at elections; reviewed the feudal system of land tenure, and, above all, emptied the prisons of those deprived of their liberty for political reasons.

Unhappily the whole Government of Hungary remains wedded to oligarchic principles. The fear complex inculcated by the years of chaos remains. And the prison doors are still closed.

CHAPTER XXIII

HUNGARIAN JUSTICE

"Any development which, like a steam-roller, would crush independent minds and souls, or take advantage of every expression of freedom of the spirit to load the individuals guilty of such expression with chains and throw them into a dungeon, would again bring about a hellish eclipse of earth and sky. Soul-murder is the worst kind of murder. What compensation could we offer the bird who is accustomed to fly in freedom through the sky, after we had clipped its wings? Ask him how you can still make him happy. 'Wring my neck,' he will answer you."

GERHARDT HAUPTMANN.

"THERE is a tremendous bias against Communists and Socialists in Hungary, a bias that is only too often reflected in sentences passed by the Hungarian Courts," stated the *Manchester Guardian* not long ago. Certainly the continued suppression by punitive means of freedom of conscience and political opinion within the frontiers of Admiral Horthy's Hungary make life in that land pleasanter for those attracted by conservative ways in politics than for others who prefer Socialist or Leninist ideas.

Unhappily, despite Count Karolyi's promise of a Hungary governed "in accordance with the social order of Western nations," the views of the ruling caste regarding free speech, free press and the right of every citizen to decide his political views for himself are more akin to the dogma of Rome and Moscow than the democratic practice of Paris and London.

Hungary is nominally governed by an elected Parliament. In that Parliament sit the deputies of the Social Democratic Party. Yet in the spring of 1929—nine years after the White Terror—Dr. Eugen Kis, a leader of the Left wing of that party, lawyer and town councillor, was condemned by a Hungarian Court to three years' imprisonment for having published a Socialist pamphlet.

This pamphlet, entitled *Back to the Masses*, appealed to Hungarian Socialists to attempt to secure reforms which are already enjoyed by the peoples of Western Europe. If the programme which is outlined was illegal, as the conviction suggests, then the Hungarian Government might, with equal justification, have thrown into prison every member of the Social Democratic Party, all of whom by their membership avow their agreement with Kis's arguments.

Kis, in his pamphlet, expressly opposed any return to Bolshevism, and pointed out that the most effective weapon against continued Communist propaganda in Hungary was the institution of an energetic struggle against "the disguised Hungarian Fascism."

"The Hungarian Parliament," ran Kis's argument, "elected without a secret ballot, is only a sham Parliament. The child must be called by its correct name. The Hungarian political system is a dictatorship. Under this dictatorship Parliament can only be a debating assembly for unmasking Hungarian Fascism, for exhibiting the war dangers of

the Hungarian revision policy and the Hungarian-Italian alliance, for preaching republican opinions and a radical agrarian reform."

According to the judgment of the Hungarian Court, Kis was guilty of preaching rebellion and instigating opposition against the institutions of the monarchy and private property. As already mentioned, every Hungarian Socialist accepts the programme outlined in the pamphlet; hence the remark made by Kis in his speech for his own defence, when he declared that with his conviction the possibility of any legal Socialist propaganda in Hungary came to an end. The Kis trial suggested the determination of the Government to continue to use the Courts to suppress all criticism of both the internal and foreign policy of the Horthy régime.

Kis appealed against the sentence passed upon him, and the appeal was heard on October 24, 1930. The appellant reiterated the fact that his pamphlet advocated nothing more revolutionary than the development of a democratic Hungary and the introduction of democratic principles into its social and political structure, but the Public Prosecutor declared that the pamphlet was "Bolshevistic."

The Court confirmed the verdict of guilty against Kis, on the ground that he had, by publishing his pamphlet, shown provocation against the possessing classes, insulted the Hungarian nation, and shown provocation against the institution of a monarchy. The sentence was reduced to one year's imprisonment, with loss of political rights, Kis to be debarred from practising as a lawyer for five years.

In 1926 a Communist named Rakosi was sentenced to eight years' penal servitude merely for *being a Communist*. His sister, Mrs. Gisela Zelinger, succeeded in communicating with her brother through a fellow-prisoner. Her letters were discovered and she was arrested under section 467 of the Hungarian Penal Code, under which those corrupting prison officials are liable to a penalty of five years' penal servitude.

As recently as 1930 the White Terror continued in a "legalised" form: several batches of alleged Communists who had been imprisoned without trial for months, or even years, being brought before the Hungarian Courts to receive sentences.

These batches of prisoners were charged with being Communists, the hearings taking place behind closed doors, the prisoners being deprived even of the right of selecting counsel for the defence.

During these trials, it was clearly demonstrated that Communists have no rights in Hungary to-day. The charges were based partly upon confessions alleged to have been extorted by the police under torture, and partly on the evidence of *agents provocateurs* of the Horthy régime.

The usual method of securing the necessary "evidence" is to beat the prisoner on the soles of the feet. One prisoner, named Sebes, was tortured so savagely that, maddened by his sufferings, he jumped from a second-storey window of the prison and was terribly injured. Yet

another, under torture, made a confession incriminating other Communists who were immediately arrested, whereupon the unfortunate man responsible was expelled from the Communist Party.

Every foreign journalist in Buda-Pest, and every foreign resident in Hungary, knows that these atrocities are part and parcel of the continuous systematic pressure aimed at extirpating Communism in Hungary.¹ Yet after the unbridled cruelty in the prisons, the most serious charge brought against any of the 1930 prisoners was that they had been guilty of Communist propaganda, or membership of an illegal political party. Whether political oppression is the best method of converting workers from allegiance to Lenin's views, or whether any civilised Government is justified in punishing its citizens for their political beliefs—however distasteful those beliefs may be to the existing régime—is a matter which readers will decide for themselves. Here I merely record the fact that in Hungary Communists have no rights whatever, and that men and women have been tortured, imprisoned and sentenced for no other crime than their political beliefs.

The denial of the right of public trial, and the impossibility, therefore, of reporting the evidence in the actions against those Communists was contrary to the Hungarian legal code, which stipulates that trials are only held *in camera* when the evidence is of a nature calculated to endanger public order.

The right of open trial having been denied, the Courts proceeded to deprive the prisoners of the right of defence. Barristers who accepted the task of defending the prisoners in these and previous political trials were subject to every sort of social pressure, and came forward to state the case for the accused at great risk. The authorities took the view that, by so doing, they had proved themselves Communist sympathisers, if not actual Communists. One barrister in the trial held in June, 1930, was arrested, and others suffered such interference that there was no opportunity of the case for the defence being adequately presented. By these methods some of the prisoners were induced to entrust their defence to reactionary lawyers completely out of sympathy with progressive thought, with the result that one of the thirty Communists who faced the Hungarian judges in the first of these trials had to listen while his "defending counsel," a notorious reactionary named Surgoth, denounced his client in a long

¹ "In the country districts there is a veritable White Terror. The slightest attempt at anything that looks like protest is mercilessly crushed. On the 18th of this month six were arrested at Szonolk. They were beaten almost to death by the police. On the 19th they were found to be in a terrible condition. Nevertheless, they were taken in chains to Mezotur. Some of them seem to have suffered lasting injury (Johannes Fodor was beaten in the face so that most of his teeth were knocked out). Whether they were again beaten at Mezotur is not known, but on the 23rd the wife of the prisoner Antony Tiszo came to see him. He was lying unconscious on the prison floor. . . . Such incidents are not exceptional, they are typical. Everyone who thinks over these matters at all asks himself with growing anxiety where it will all lead to? But no one can give an answer. The authorities have no answer except force and more and more force." *Manchester Guardian*, June 27, 1930.

speech composed entirely of insults and invective against Communism and all that it stands for.

The conditions under which political prisoners live in Horthy's Hungary, both before trial and after conviction, are far more severe than those reserved for convicts. The persecution of political opponents in public, and the unsatisfactory trial procedure is but a fitting introduction to conditions that await the unfortunate Radical who finds himself or herself incarcerated in the prisons of Buda-Pest, conditions all the more deplorable when the noble history of the Magyar people and the absence of vindictiveness in their characters are remembered. Only when dealing with their own countrymen do the Hungarians display a cynical and calculating disregard for the rights of man which is in striking contrast to the charm and courtesy reserved for foreigners.

In most European countries those in prison awaiting trial are permitted to wear their own clothes and to eat food sent in from outside. But in the prisons of Buda-Pest every person detained for trial is at once required to don convict clothing, and the admission of food from outside is forbidden. What that means to those awaiting trial, often for two or three years, may be judged by the fact that the contractors who "cater" for the prisoners are paid the sum of 48 *groschen* (about threepence) per head per day. Before the war, the regulation which permitted two parcels of food a week to be sent to every prisoner, whether awaiting trial or convicted, served to enable them to maintain health on a diet of thin soup and bread. Now even that concession has been withdrawn, and every prisoner is confined to the insufficient and unpalatable prison diet, it is no matter of surprise that many hunger-strikes have occurred in Hungarian prisons. Beatings and torture are frequently administered, upon the most trivial pretexts or for no reason at all. Of that aspect of Hungarian prisons to-day, concerning which evidence is difficult to secure, let a former political prisoner and well-known Radical, Ladislaus Fenyés, speak :

" I myself only once received a push in the back from a *gendarme* because I did not walk in front of him quickly enough, but I had the opportunity of seeing a whole series of brutalities when I was brought down to the examining judge, or for a 'walk' (which only lasted for ten minutes instead of the prescribed hour). But mostly I had the opportunity of hearing the cases from the cries, the moans and the entreaties : ' Don't do anything to me, warder, don't hit me ! ' Such cries of despair resounded through the cement and iron corridors of the prison which were otherwise as still as death. And then cries sounded among the corridor corners of the various storeys like echoes in the mountains : prisoners with weak nerves or women prisoners from the fourth floor joined in the symphony of the prison.

" One winter's afternoon we went in a long goose-march outside

the doctor's consulting room. In an unheated building, with windows made dim by human moisture, we were all likely to be ill. In an iron cell on the third floor sat the doctor in a winter overcoat and shawl with his hands in fur gloves. In one minute he dealt with two or three patients by handing them pills and medicines which stood on a table in front of him. Suddenly we heard heavy footsteps . . . two prisoners were carrying a youth—he was perhaps fourteen or sixteen years of age—he was clad in a thin linen jacket, just as we used to carry the wounded during the war. Two men link hands, and the sick man sits on their arms and places his hands round their necks. Thus they carried the boy, whose haggard, sunken face was glowing red with fever in spite of the cold.

His head had sunk on his chest. He was taken in front of us to the 'consulting room,' but hardly a minute had passed before he was brought out again. When they were already on the stairs with him the escort began to box his ears. The boy turned his head quickly from one side to the other, said no word, but only uttered inarticulate sounds. This made the escort angry. 'You shirker, are you shamming? Can't you walk? Are you pretending to be helpless? I'll soon show you something.'

"In the morning came the tapped-out message—the prison wireless carried from wall to wall: 'No. 111/16 died early this morning. He is just being carried out in a box.'"

Among the few private citizens who attempted to mitigate the severity of these conditions, was a woman member of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party named Flora Martos. This lady, in the early days of the present régime, formed a small society for the help of those confined in Horthy's prisons, both for political and criminal offences, collected money and clothing, and sent books, food (when possible), tooth brushes, soap and other little "luxuries" otherwise unobtainable in the prison cells. For this humane work, she and three of her assistants were arrested, the charge against her being that her attempts to aid political prisoners were intended to serve "Communist purposes." Despite the fact that Flora Martos was able to substantiate her statement that she had never had any connection with the Communist movement in Hungary, the Buda-Pest Court sentenced her to ten months' imprisonment for attempting to overthrow the existing social order. One of her assistants, a student at the Technical High School, received a sentence of five months' imprisonment and the two remaining defendants were acquitted. This trial made it clear that any attempt whatever to relieve the severity of the conditions endured by political prisoners in Hungary, either by debate or practical aid, was frowned upon by the Hungarian authorities.

As a protest against the ruthlessness of the prison conditions, a concerted hunger-strike was declared by political prisoners confined at Oedenburg, Buda-Pest, Waitzen, Szegedin, Harta and other large

prisons, on October 31, 1929. This "hunger-strike against hunger" had been predicted by the Hungarian Socialists as unavoidable for months before that date.

The strike was a protest of the "politicals" against their confinement with ordinary criminals, treatment worse than that accorded to ordinary criminals, unpalatable food, the prohibition of parcels from outside, and the regulation which forbade political prisoners to receive any reading matter or correspondence whatever.

An official complaint against these conditions had been conveyed to the Minister of Justice by Social Democratic deputies in the Hungarian Parliament in July, 1929, but both this attempt to secure redress, and a further demand for the "civilising" of Hungarian prison conditions, failed to secure any amelioration in the prisoners' lot. Therefore the political prisoners took direct action and proclaimed a hunger-strike.

The reply of the Government to this action took the form of a statement declaring that there were no political prisoners whatever in Hungary! All those hunger-striking, announced this official *communiqué*, had been sentenced for "endangering the social or political order" or for acts of provocation. (The Hungarian penal code only recognises duellists as political offenders.)

Accordingly the prison authorities announced that the hunger-strike was an offence against discipline, and proceeded to fight it by forcible feeding. Those who resisted were put into straight-jackets.

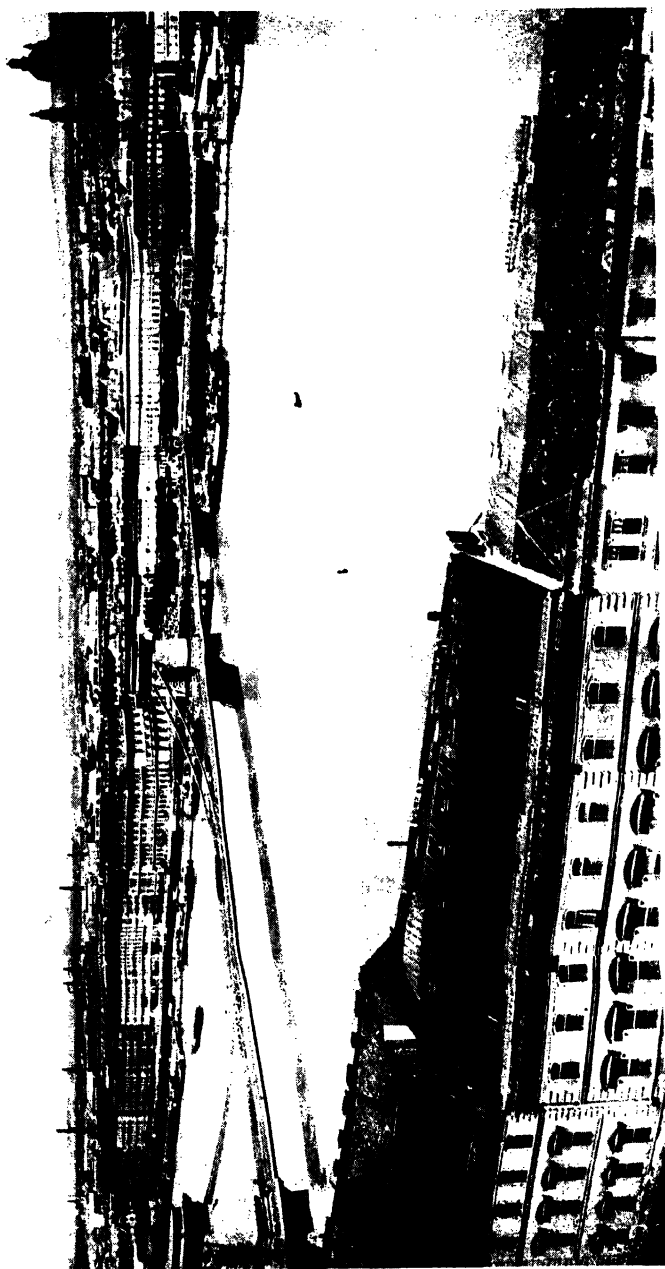
Two prisoners died before the strike was broken, the first of these victims being a Communist named Lowy, who had been condemned to three and a half years' imprisonment with hard labour for being a member of an illegal organisation. In spite of forcible feeding under medical supervision, Lowy died in the prison hospital from general weakness.

The second to die was a metal worker named Staron, confined in the Waizen prison, who succumbed after twelve days' hunger strike from malnutrition and ill-treatment. Two other prisoners ended the hunger-strike in a critical condition, including the Communist Rakosi mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Many prisoners who maintained their defiance to the end were sentenced to one week's imprisonment in total darkness as a disciplinary measure.

Early in November, 1929, the strike collapsed, the Minister of Justice stating that he could not deal with the complaints of the prisoners until normal conditions had been restored. The strike passed, but the main abuse against which it was directed—that the distinction between political and criminal prisoners common to all civilised nations should be restored—has not yet been granted. There are, presumably, still no political prisoners in Hungary.

Despite this denial of freedom of political opinion which has characterised the new Hungary, when, on March 1, 1930, Admiral Horthy celebrated the tenth anniversary of his election as Regent of



GENERAL VIEW OF BUDA-PEST AND THE DANUBE FROM THE ROYAL CASTLE

that country, there were many prepared to overlook much and remember only that the Magyar people had travelled far along the road to ordered government since the day when a *bourgeois* Government once more took office at Buda-Pest. Horthy and his ministers took control, in 1920, of a Hungary in dissolution. They led it back to the path of ordered nationalism—restored to the Hungarian people security, patriotism and a new hope in the *Risorgimento* of the Magyar race. But not to all the people—not to the working people and peasants. Not to those who happened to be Communists or Socialists. There the psychology of fear held back the Government from decisions which might have removed much bitterness that exists to-day. The Horthy régime was not big enough to recognise the fundamental right of every citizen to hold his own opinions and to express those opinions openly and without fear.

Thus we find that, while the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of Horthy's term of office as Regent passed with pomp, ceremony and peace, a great demonstration staged by the Hungarian working classes on September 1, 1930, to protest against abuses and to demand the right of assembly and free speech, was first prohibited by the Government, and then, when 150,000 workers assembled in the Ring and Andrássy Street, at Buda-Pest, in defiance of this prohibition, dispersed by the police with many arrests.

As the perfectly orderly demonstration was breaking up, the police attacked with drawn truncheons and many of the workers were struck down. Those arrested fared worse. In one prison fifty were penned in narrow cells, so that they had to pass the night without sleep or rest. Many were cruelly beaten before release, in the presence of police officers. But, most terrible of all, injured workers who sought help at the hospitals after the fracas were handed over to the police after their injuries had been attended to, even the severely injured being removed from the hospitals and taken to prison.

The men so treated were in the streets to demand, in orderly demonstration, three reforms : an amnesty for political offenders, a measure of agrarian reform and the introduction of the secret ballot at elections, a measure which has for some time been included in the programme of the Bethlen Government, but which that Government refuses to introduce.

At present the ballot is secret in the cities and open in the country districts. Under this arrangement, although, in the cities, the Opposition has big majorities in a handful of constituencies, the Government is maintained in office by the country votes, where the dread of the landlords and political victimisation ensures that no Opposition deputies are elected.¹

¹ At the last General Election voting was secret in only 46 constituencies out of 245. The fact that from ten to fifteen per cent of the electors must declare in writing their support of a candidate to make his nomination valid provides further opportunities for victimisation.

The denial of free speech finds its counterpart in the absence of any freedom of the press.

The Bethlen Government reserves to itself the right to suppress any newspaper publishing matter critical of the régime, and this right has been freely used during the past ten years.

The *Magyar Vilag* was suppressed by the Government for six months, and allowed to resume publication under guarantees of good behaviour and after its name had been changed to the *Magyar Hirlap*.

Opposition newspapers are subject to heavy fines which in most cases they find it impossible to pay. The result is that they disappear. Promises made by the Government to transfer this power of censorship from its own shoulders on to the Courts are not expected by Buda-Pest journalists to result in any improvement in conditions. For, unfortunately, there are no independent Courts in Hungary, and there is more hope of influencing the Government by parliamentary action, demonstrations or the pressure of foreign opinion, than would be the case were decisions to be left to the discretion of the Courts.

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With the exception of one group of prisoners confined in gaol for republican propaganda, all the political prisoners in Hungary are Socialists or Communists. *Agents provocateurs* moving among the workmen in the factories keep the prison cells well filled. It is within my knowledge that twenty-four political prisoners have been confined in Horthy's jails for twelve years.

Is this elaborate framework of suppression and tyranny necessary for the safety of the Magyar State? Must the fundamental rights of man be denied in order to save Hungary from a relapse into the barbarism of 1919? If so, the methods of Admiral Horthy's might be held to be justified. But is it so?

Those who know conditions in Hungary to-day are agreed that the suppression is overdone. It does not need to take the violent forms which have kept working-class Hungary in a state of terror for ten years. Equally satisfactory results for the Hungarian people—some may think more satisfactory results—might have been gained by more lenient methods, by the ending of the political terror and the re-establishment of free speech and a free press. Above all, by an admission on the part of Count Bethlen's Government that a Communist is as much entitled to hold and to express his own opinions peaceably as is Admiral Horthy himself.

A move in the direction of wise reform on the part of the Hungarian authorities would remove the last lingering danger of a violent overthrow of the forces of law and order. The Hungarian aristocrats—who are among the most skilful politicians in Europe, with a thousand years of experience behind them—could, by granting the reasonable reforms demanded by the Hungarian people and abolishing punitive measures and class justice, remove for ever the

reproach that they are responsible for the maintenance of a feudal tyranny.

Why is no move made? For the answer we must go back to the Red Terror. The psychology of fear which infected the national consciousness during that time still paralyses the will to reform.

The sufferings of Hungarian prisoners to-day are a tragedy of fear—fear that holds a whole Government paralysed and incapable of instituting reforms long overdue and perfectly possible of accomplishment.

THE SMALLER NATIONS

CHAPTER XXIV

JUGO-SLAVIA, ROUMANIA AND LITHUANIA

"Those who, like myself, remember the free, easy-going old Serbia of the past are struck with wonder at the depth of moral degradation and personal cowardice which has been forced upon a country so independent by a few years of police and military terror."

COUNT LUIGI SFORZA.

THE nations in which personal security and political liberty, as those words are understood in the Western democracies, have been stamped out by violence stretch like a black ribbon across the map of Europe. From Lithuania, on the Baltic, through Poland, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, Hungary and Italy to a Jugo-Slavia doubled in area by the gains of the great war, and a similarly extended Roumania, democracy has been extinguished, and peoples live under tyrannies either more or less efficient. That the denial of liberty in the smaller nations named is a continuance of rather than a digression from their history, is poor consolation to those who have suffered harshly in the hands of autocratic governments—governments emboldened, perhaps, in their policy of repression and violence by the knowledge that public opinion in Europe has little time to devote to events in the minor countries.

The Balkans have always been notorious for their lack of political freedom. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that political liberty in the new Jugo-Slav State, as represented by parliamentary institutions, lasted only ten years from the conclusion of the Great War. Democratic Jugo-Slavia disappeared overnight with the issue of a Manifesto on January 6, 1929, which dissolved Parliament and existing political parties, abrogated all political rights of every sort, and set up a Dictatorship of the Crown, supported by the Army. This *coup d'état* was carried out without force, neither political parties nor organised labour being strong enough to offer resistance.

The dictatorship was at first designated a "temporary measure," but on July 5, 1930, the government at Belgrade issued a *communiqué* which expressly denied reports that the dictatorship was to be modified, and which outlined a definite and permanent programme for the maintenance of autocratic rule. Paragraph 1. of this programme declared that the *Skupshtina* (parliament) and parliamentary institutions had been dispensed with "for ever." All political parties are prohibited and all State officials and teachers are ordered to work "according to the new principles." "There is no place either in public or State service for officials whose walk and whose bearing is in contradiction to the above principles," ran the pronouncement.

In the light of this official statement of policy it is scarcely surprising that repression, systematic and ruthless, against all those who have refused to accept the new régime, or who criticise the dictatorship should be a feature of life in Jugo-Slavia to-day.

All freedom of political opinion in that country was extinguished by a special decree issued shortly after the dictatorship assumed control. This decree provided that sentence of death or twenty years' imprisonment shall be passed on any person :

1. Writing, publishing, printing or disseminating books, newspapers or placards aiming at the provocation of the use of force against State officials or the disturbance of public law and order. The same penalty shall be incurred by writing or oral propaganda aiming at the forcible alteration of the political or social order of the State.
2. Becoming a member, organising or supporting any association which aims at the spread of communism, anarchy, terrorism or co-operation for the purpose of seizing power by illegal means.
3. Letting buildings or rooms to persons whose object is to commit the crimes mentioned above.
4. Taking part in organisation or propaganda for the purpose of provoking military revolts, refusal to obey orders or discontent among soldiers, or inducing citizens or soldiers to refuse to perform military service.
5. Entering into association with persons or associations in other countries for the purpose of gaining support or preparing a revolution or a forcible alteration of the present political situation of the country.

Under this decree, all associations or political parties which carry on any propaganda for the alteration of the existing order of the State, whether by peaceable means or otherwise, are prohibited and dissolved ; also all political parties possessing a religious or racial character—a decision which was responsible for the trial of twenty-four Croat leaders, headed by M. Matchek, President of the Croatian Peasant Party, which occurred in 1930.

It was further declared that State officials, employees of the military administration or officials of independent corporations who either individually or in a body withhold their labour by striking, shall be liable to a period of imprisonment of from six months to three years.

Thus runs the law for the Protection of Public Security according to the Jugo-Slav dictatorship, under which it became a criminal offence for any Radical or Socialist in that country to receive a letter from any political party in another land.

How has this law been administered ? Six months after the *coup d'état* the Supreme Court of Justice at Belgrade, after a trial lasting three days, condemned a Communist named Andrejevic, a technical student, to fifteen years' imprisonment for circulating Communist literature " on the night of the 10th to 11th of January "—five days

after the suppression of parliamentary government. Five other Communists were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment varying from six to twelve years for the same offence.

At the inaugural assembly of the Chamber of Lawyers at Agram on June 9, 1929, Dr. Siebenschein, president of the former committee of lawyers, proposed that the meeting should send a telegram of greeting to the King. Whereupon some of the lawyers present demanded that the message should include a request that the monarch should give back the political rights of citizens of Jugo-Slavia. This demand instituted an offence against the law quoted above and the four lawyers who voted for it were arrested and brought before the Public Prosecutor for having "made an attempt against the present political order." The proposer of the motion was later sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Golmayer, secretary of the Metal Workers' Union, at a meeting of his members, declared that the workers must not wait for their fate to be decided by the Government, but must strive to effect an improvement in their conditions through their class organisations. The police agent present at the meeting ruled that this utterance was political, and as all political propaganda is illegal, Golmayer was arrested. For three days neither his wife nor friends could discover what had happened to him; then it was announced that he had been sentenced to twenty days' imprisonment, with a warning that any further political utterances would result in his appearance before the Special Tribunal for the defence of the Jugo-Slav dictatorship.

On July 19, 1929, the premises of the Esperanto Club at Brod were searched by the police, who seized books, newspapers and correspondence, and arrested three members of the club as Communists. All three were handcuffed, their explanations brushed aside, and taken to Belgrade. In Belgrade they learnt that the charge against them was "being Esperantist—which is a Communist affair." They occupied cells in three prisons before being finally released.

Not without humour was the experience of Pribicevic, former Minister of Police, who in that capacity created the Law for the Protection of the State mentioned above. When this former official desired to revisit Belgrade on account of the illness of his wife, he received a letter informing him that "the City Administration of Belgrade . . . has received information that your life is threatened with danger if you come to Belgrade and therefore advises you to remain in Zagreb."

Pribicevic disregarded this command, and went to the capital, where he was arrested, first interned and later deported to Brus, in Inner Serbia.

Many such examples of the systematic repression which stultifies political life in Jugo-Slavia to-day might be quoted, but they would add nothing to the picture.

Even more ruthless than the suppression of political opinion has

been the attitude of the military dictatorship to the minorities within the Jugo-Slav kingdom—minorities which have not even the ties of a common bond of race to cause them to accept the new absolutism under which they are living. These minorities number approximately 7,000,000, including 4,000,000 Croats, over 1,000,000 Slovenes, 150,000 Turks, 500,000 Germans, 470,000 Hungarians, 440,000 Albanians, and 231,000 Roumanians, and the denial of their legitimate aspirations by the dictatorship constitutes a standing threat to the peace of the Balkans.

The conditions under which these minorities live are vividly described in the following passage from a letter concerning the Bulgarian minority written by M. E. Durham and published in the *Manchester Guardian* of January 3, 1931 :

“ As for the treatment of the Bulgars of annexed Macedonia, it is explained in the *dossier* attached to the petition lately presented to the League of Nations by MM. Chaloff and Anastasoff. It contains the names of 222 villagers slaughtered by Serbian authorities. Date, place and particulars are given. Some were murdered on the road, others tortured to death, some by flogging, one after having his eyes poked out. A girl was killed by a Serb *gendarme* for defending her honour. In the village of Garvan twenty-eight men and two children were captured in their houses and fields, bound, and mowed down by machine-guns. Their only crime was that they said they were Bulgars. Their relatives were forced to see the massacre. The two delegates solemnly assert that they know all the facts to be true and state that a Commission could authenticate them on the spot. All that the tortured population asks is that their treaty rights as a minority be respected : that the Bulgar schools and churches existing previous to the annexation be re-opened ; that political prisoners be amnestied and emigrants allowed to return home. Among the acts of brutality one of the cruellest is that the wife of any man who escapes across the frontier is seized, a decree of divorce is pronounced, then she is handed over to be forcibly ‘ married ’ to any unmarried Serb recently settled in the district who chooses to take her.”

By the provisions of the Treaty of St. Germain, which recognised the enlarged Serb-Croat-Slovene State, it was expressly laid down that the treaty “ gave to the nationalities of all territories within this State, of whatever race, language or religion, the absolute guarantee that they should be governed according to the principles of freedom and justice.”

How far removed from “ the principles of freedom and justice,” are conditions under the dictatorship is shown by the statement set out above ; and by the experiences of the Croatian minority during the past few years.

Those experiences were set out in a memorandum presented to the

League of Nations, on behalf of the Croatian minority, on January 25, 1930.

"The absolute rule of the King of Serbia has been introduced throughout the territory of the Croat State," declared this document. "This rule deprives the Croat nation of any possibility of legal self-defence in its own country by destroying the liberty of the press, withdrawing the right of assembly, prohibiting any criticism of the behaviour of Government organs, abolishing the independence of the judges, setting up the Extraordinary Court for political offences, and conferring arbitrary authority on the police, who not only ill-treat persons under arrest by trampling them under foot, beating them with sticks and sand-bags, fastening them to walls, driving needles and nails into their flesh, pulling off their nails, burning candles under their naked bodies, depriving them of food and drink until they lose consciousness, but do not even shrink from murder, the culprits escaping scot-free."

The detailed statements of tortures contained in this memorandum are too long to quote here in full, and many of the cases are better left to the imagination. But one or two specimen examples of torture inflicted upon innocent men of the Croatian race may be given :

"The former Croat Deputy, Professor Jelasitch, was arrested on November 30, 1929, at 11 a.m. and imprisoned in a cell at the police-station, being detained there until the night of December 7. This cell contained no seat, no bed and no bedding, and there was no alternative for him but to sit or lie on the damp, cold concrete floor. The window was closed by boards so that no light could penetrate into the cell. Not till he had been there for thirty hours was he given any food. He is physically weak and in bad health and asked to be medically examined. This request was refused—his guards threatening him with flogging. A week later he was released as innocent.

"In a cell near that of Professor Jelasitch, Stjepan Javor, merchant, and Marko Hranilovic, compositor, were imprisoned. One night at one o'clock, Deputy Jelasitch heard the guards dragging out one of those two prisoners, who owing to the tortures he had undergone was unable to walk, to be interrogated. He was not brought back until after 2.15 a.m. The gasping and groaning of the wretched man could be heard until dawn.

"Mazuran, a university student, developed a large abscess on the right side of his abdomen which caused him severe pain. He frequently asked for medical assistance, but the only answer he received from the prison guard was : 'You have been shut up here to be put an end to, not to undergo a cure.'

"Pavac Marganov was so badly knocked about at his interrogation in July, 1929, that he died in the cell three days later. His death occurred during the afternoon. At about midnight all lights

in the police-station were extinguished and Marganov's body was thrown through the window into the courtyard so as to make it appear that he had committed suicide. The official doctor later reported after a post-mortem examination that Marganov's death was caused by flogging and on August 1, 1929, he accused the police officials at the office of the Public Prosecutor at Zagreb. No proceedings were taken by the authorities against those responsible.

"In the same cell was Gjuro Basikarov, who was tortured in the following manner: his hands and feet were bound separately and then he was bent like a ball and his hands and feet were tied together. An iron bar was passed under his stomach and the ends were placed upon two chairs. In this position he was interrogated. When the answers were not satisfactory, he was beaten with sticks, by two police officers, who threw him on the floor and stamped upon his toes with their boots. For some weeks Basikarov could not get up from his bed unaided, and even later he was for a long time unable to put on his shoes. He suffers severely from pulmonary tuberculosis, and the prison doctor told him that he could not be treated in the hospital as he was politically suspect."

Confirmation of the existence in Jugo-Slavia to-day of police methods more reminiscent of old Turkey than of modern Europe is to be found in the evidence of the twenty-four accused Croats whose trial opened at Belgrade on April 24, 1930. The prisoners at this trial included M. Matchek, one of the most prominent political leaders of the Jugo-Slav State and several humble labourers and peasants. All were charged with complicity in a terrorist conspiracy against the authority of the dictatorship, and with being implicated in a series of bomb outrages either actually perpetrated or in preparation.

The evidence for the prosecution consisted almost entirely of "confessions" made by the accused during interrogation by the police or before the examining magistrates. Concerning the value of those "confessions," and the methods by which they were secured, the Balkans correspondent of *The Times* stated (June 17, 1930):

"The most unpleasant feature of the trial to a foreign spectator was the evidence which it provided of the mediæval methods employed by the Zagreb police to extort confessions from the accused. . . . One of the favourite methods was to lash the prisoner's wrists and ankles together behind his back and then suspend him by means of a rifle passed under the lashing and supported on two tables, while his feet were beaten. One of the accused, M. Yellashitch, after treatment of this sort, was described by the prison doctor who examined him as being 'in a state of complete collapse, with his mind apparently wandering.'"

One of the prisoners named Bernarditch, who pleaded "Not Guilty," despite a full confession previously made to the police,

stated that at his first interrogation by the police at Zagreb he was ill-treated from 6 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. :

“He had his wrists and ankles tied together behind his back, and was strung up head downwards until he fainted. Then he was played football with from one side of the room to the other. Part of this scene took place in the presence of M. Bedekovitch, the chief of the Zagreb police, who ordered that he should be treated like that until he confessed all. When he began to be communicative, M. Bedekovitch gave him a good dinner with wine and cigarettes and ‘treated him like a gentleman’ after he had pressed him to say what his relations with Dr. Matchek had been. Next day he was brought before the examining magistrate, who told him that if he confessed about Dr. Matchek he would only get ten years in prison instead of twenty-two. Not wishing to have another dose of police treatment, he complied.”¹

Another prisoner, Professor Dakov Jelašitch, the former deputy already mentioned, stated in court that the confession obtained from him was extorted under torture and he did not even remember the crimes to which he was supposed to have confessed. He signed the statement because the Zagreb police told him that he would not live until the next day if he did not.

After a hearing that lasted more than seven weeks, the Special Court delivered judgment. Dr. Matchek and eight other prisoners were acquitted, and the remainder of the accused condemned to various terms of imprisonment. In this judgment the Court acted in accordance with the evidence ; undoubtedly several of the younger prisoners had been guilty of terrorist acts, but more important than the sentences was the revelation of police torture which the prosecution tacitly admitted during the course of the trial.

“It is surprising that the advanced thinkers, Orient Freemasons and political economists who compose the present Government of Jugo-Slavia should have failed to prevent this scandal in the civilised and accessible capital of Croatia,” stated *The Times* (June 17, 1930). “No one expects a Dictatorship to be mild, but some Dictatorships have been intelligent.”

The story of the systematic ill-treatment of all suspected of being political opponents of the Jugo-Slav dictatorship is too long to record in detail. Nor do methods vary. But one further case, concerning the brutal torture of a German authoress named Hilde Isolde Reiter, who was arrested and imprisoned at Belgrade, must not be omitted.

In an account of her experiences addressed to the Prime Minister of Jugo-Slavia, this woman declared :

“I, the undersigned Hilde Reiter, was arrested by the police of Bečskerek on May 15th (1930), on suspicion of having been concerned

¹ *The Times*, April 26, 1930.

in the writing of anonymous letters, an act regarded by the police as contrary to the Defence of the State Act.

"The same evening I was several times summoned from the police-station for brief interrogations. As I affirmed (with truth) at each interrogation that I had no notion what the whole business was about, I was taken the same evening about nine o'clock from the police-station to the room of the deputy-captain of police, Nikola Maksimovic, where the detective Kraljev began to interrogate me. This man showed me an iron bar and said 'You are not as strong as this iron bar.' He then fastened my wrists with handcuffs. He forcibly removed my shoes and knocked me down. Then he pulled my handcuffed hands down between my knees and inserted under my knees and over my hands an iron bar. Then he rolled me over like a ball, so that I lay immobilised on my back with my legs in the air. Having got me in this position he began to beat me on the soles of my feet with a belt. At the same time he poured out a stream of abuse and shouted at me, as I lay helpless, that I must confess everything that he told me to.

"When the blood had run into my hands and caused them to swell I was untied and ordered to walk up and down for a time bare-footed in the corridor before the chancellory. Then the first torture was repeated—I was again tied up and treated as before. After this I had to put my feet in a basin full of cold water, and then after a pause the threats and beating on the naked soles of my feet began again, in the manner above described. This went on until midnight.

"The vice-president of police, Vojin Nedic, came into the room once and looked on at my ill-treatment. I asked him to order them to stop beating me. He replied: 'I'm not God, you needn't say your prayers to me.'

"As I cried too loud during my first torturing, detective Kraljev took a dirty cloth and gagged me with it, and wrapped a tablecloth round my head so that the prisoners should not hear my cries. Nevertheless, they still heard the noise of the beating.

"When they untied me about midnight and took the gag out of my mouth I was bleeding and crying. Detective Kraljev said to me: 'That is nothing, you haven't lost any teeth yet' as I should, if I did not confess everything."

The Terror in Jugo-Slavia is a two-headed Terror. It is aimed against all who hold political opinions not favoured by the ruling *clique*, and similarly against all within the Jugo-Slav kingdom who are not of Serbian race and who persist in demanding rights clearly laid down in the treaty which created the Serbo-Croatian State. And the methods of that Terror, as I have shown, are more closely akin to the activities of terrorist bands along the Albanian-Macedonian frontier in former days than of a civilised Government. It is fair to

add that the present Government did not invent those methods—they merely perpetuated them, thinking perhaps that the world would be too well occupied to be much interested in the sufferings of minority peoples or stray political opponents of a régime based upon *force majeure*.

Changes may take place in Jugo-Slavia; it is reported that King Alexander has felt the strain of wielding absolute power, and a "resumption of parliamentary government" may have been announced by the time these words are read. Unhappily, the lessons of history show that in the Balkan nations the more conditions change the more they are the same, and a return to parliamentary methods may only mean exchanging one form of dictatorship for another, more constitutional in form, but similarly based upon the denial of individual freedom. Whatever the future may reveal, early information concerning the electoral methods contemplated was hardly reassuring.

For Jugo-Slavia is close to Roumania and Roumania has a parliamentary régime which even its most devoted adherents could scarcely claim has made that country "safe for democracy."

"Bounded by Russia, Poland, Bulgaria and the Black Sea, lies the Land of Corruption," wrote George Seldes, an American observer. "Bucharest is its capital, and until recently its Queen was Marie. The Queen could be summed up in two words, 'Poor Ferdinand.' He is dead and she has lost her power. But the national corruption of Roumania remains, secretly, behind a massive bulwark of terroristic censorship. All of us who have tried to pierce it have been hounded by the police, or arrested or expelled."¹

It is a significant fact, and one that sheds a revealing light upon political persecution in Roumania to-day that while nearly everywhere else along the frontiers of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics escapes from Russia are frequent, in Bessarabia, the province which Roumania "won" from Russia in 1918, the tide of refugees flows the other way. There, and there only, the peasants are shot down by frontier guards while making their dashes across the frontier into Bolshevik Russia.

Neither Communists nor Radicals enjoy a very happy life under the Roumanian terror. It was in Roumania, in 1922, that a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl Mania Ehrlick, was sentenced, to ten years' imprisonment for carrying a Communist placard! After serving six years of this sentence, the child was released, and informed that she had been pardoned. The following day, she was re-arrested, the police stating that her name had been included among a list of pardons by mistake. Her sentence had, in fact, been reduced by two years, and she therefore returned to her prison-cell to serve two further years behind iron bars.

It was in Roumania, too, that the Social-Democrat Bujor was

¹ *The Truth Behind the News*, by George Seldes, p. 305.

sentenced to imprisonment for life for his political opinions.¹ After he had spent nine years in Doftana prison came the amnesty of 1929, but it did not bring liberation for this prisoner, who, faced with the prospect of remaining in prison until 1935, sent through a fellow-prisoner a message to his fellow Socialists declaring :

" Say to all those who still remember their former comrade in arms and enquire after him, that I am very much weakened physically by hunger but that in spite of that I am to-day as strong and even stronger in my convictions than at the time I was thrown into prison for them. If I hunger for something, it is not for food, but for the announcement of the final victory.

" Convey my greetings of brotherly love to all those who take their stand with unflinching fidelity in the ranks of the fighting working class, and assure all whom I once knew and who gave me their comradeship or friendship, that in the long days and nights of solitude their faithful friendship has always strengthened, comforted and cheered my spirit."

In June, 1930, at Bucharest, four Communists were accused of having secretly distributed propaganda material containing " anti-State " matter. One of the prisoners, Stasiuk, declared that he had submitted the leaflets concerned to the police authorities for censorship and that the propaganda had been circulated with their consent. This the chief of police denied. The Court accepted the police denial and sentenced Stasiuk to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 80,000 *lei*, with loss of civil rights for eight years.

During the early days of 1930, on the occasion of the trial at Czernowitz of twenty-four Communists, some hundred sympathisers demonstrated before the Palace of Justice. The demonstration was broken up by the police, nearly fifty persons being arrested.

Those arrested were, according to a statement made in the Roumanian Parliament by Deputy Dr. Pistiner, " brutally beaten while being arrested and also in the police prison."

Later, forty-one of the demonstrators were brought on trial before the same Court on a charge of *lèse majesté*, it being stated that the demonstrators had shouted " Down with the regency."

Regarding the conduct of this second trial Dr. Pistiner made the following statement in the Chamber on January 29, 1930 :

" The trial took place of the Communists who had previously been flogged, and medical evidence is available that they were flogged. The police had closed all entrances to the Palace of Justice and only lawyers and such people as could show that they were summoned to

¹ Bujor's only real offence was desertion from the Army while serving in revolutionary Russia. He was also charged with conspiring against the security of State—i.e. holding political opinions unpopular with the ruling party. For these offences he was sentenced to life-long imprisonment. Two amnesties have reduced this sentence to fifteen years' imprisonment, which period will expire in 1935.

appear were admitted. But a number of Fascist anti-Semites, armed with strong sticks, were admitted to the building and these men attacked and ill-treated the defending counsel without the police, who were present, making any attempt to defend him. Although the whole city knows the assailants, none of them have been arrested."

At this trial all the accused Communists were declared guilty and sentenced to imprisonment for periods up to two years.

At the beginning of 1929, the Roumanian Government admitted that over 4,000 persons were in prison awaiting trial for political offences against the State. The great majority of these were alleged Communists, imprisoned for their opinions. This persistent, ruthless persecution of all those suspected of Communist sympathies which has been a feature of life in Roumania during the past twelve years is all the more remarkable, when the figures of the parliamentary election of December 12, 1928, are examined. That appeal to the people, conducted by the National Peasant Party then in power, was the first "free" election—without terrorism and with something approaching free speech—to be held in the country since the war, and over 75 per cent of all votes cast were given to the moderate radical parties, while the Communists, in spite of extensive propaganda during the election campaign, did not succeed in securing the return of a single candidate!

At a further General Election which took place on June 1, 1931, irregularities and methods of repression were revived by the Government Cartel, which had taken office after the return of King Carol.

In this appeal to the people of Roumania the Government received 52 per cent of votes cast and the National Peasant Party only 15 per cent. A clue to this "success" of the new king's nominees may perhaps be found in the fact that only 60 per cent of the electors recorded their votes. In some cities, such as Bucharest, the percentage of voters who went to the poll was as low as 28 per cent, while M. Maniu, leader of the Peasant Party, declared after the election that the Government, "since assuming office, has abolished many personal liberties, encouraged the police to violate human rights, and conducted the elections with terror and corruption unique in Roumania."¹

In support of that denunciation the National Peasant Party brought some hundreds of cases of alleged violence, terrorism or illegality before the courts. Fifty-six distinct forms of irregularity in the conduct of the campaign were named, including the wholesale intimidation of anti-Government voters, and the illegal arrest of party workers.

During the closing days of the election eight persons were killed and five hundred arrested without any charge being brought against them, including a former Finance Minister and a former Minister of Agriculture.

¹ *Manchester Guardian*, June 3, 1931.

"Even allowing for the admitted decline in the popularity of the National Peasant Party," stated *The Times* Bucharest correspondent (June 3 1931), "the favourable result which M. Argetoianu can show in some of the National Peasant strongholds could not have been obtained without a strong application of administrative pressure."

Thus the Roumanian Government "worked the oracle" and won its victory. But it was a victory for terrorism and not for democracy.

"Roumania, which likes to claim itself part of civilised Europe, and not a part of the Balkans, is at present the most Balkanised country in Europe—Balkanisation in the European vocabulary meaning violence and corruption," wrote George Seldes, and the long story of persecution and police tyranny—too long to more than mention here—testifies to the truth of that judgment. In Roumania suppression and distortion of news calculated to harm the régime have been carried to a fine art. Graft and petty tyranny rules, while men sentenced for their opinions twelve years ago remain in prison.

At the other end of Europe is Lithuania, one of the Baltic States hacked from Russia after the collapse of Czarism, and for some years ruled over by Professor Voldemaras.

Lithuania is a small nation, with a small population. The population is, indeed, smaller than it would have been had democratic ideas been encouraged, or even tolerated, by the Government. But no country is, apparently, so small that, given sufficient belief in violence, its peoples cannot be split into opposing camps by the weapon of the Terror. And such has been the fate of Lithuania.

For some years now the trickle of migration from this little State has been going on and to-day some five hundred Lithuanian citizens are living in exile in Germany and elsewhere rather than face the uncertainties of life in their own nation. They are a very small band in a Europe that has grown accustomed to political persecution on a mass scale. But every one of those five hundred has been forced to leave hearth and homeland by persecution and by the same denial of fundamental liberties that has caused Russians, Italians and Hungarians to seek safety in exile.

In Lithuania all trade unions have been dissolved and economic strikes are illegal. A military censorship controls the press. Freedom of speech and assembly exists only for Government supporters.

In 1929 nearly 600 Lithuanian Socialists were in the convict prisons of that country, their only crime being that they favoured the introduction of a democratic régime in place of the military dictatorship which held power.

A great many more had been expelled from their homes and forced to live in other parts of the country under police supervision. They receive no pay from the State while in exile, and if they cannot find work, they must starve.

Up to September, 1929, seventy-four death sentences had been passed by Lithuanian military tribunals on political prisoners, and

twenty-six of these sentences had been carried out, the remainder being commuted to imprisonment for life. In addition to these sentences, fifteen Socialists had been shot without trial.

This systematic campaign of terrorism was aimed at destroying the Social-Democratic Party in Lithuania. To this end those who came into the hands of the authorities were frequently tortured in order to induce them to reveal the identity of other members of that party. A Socialist named Antanas died on October 23, 1928, in a prison hospital as a result of ill-treatment; another was so cruelly beaten that he became insane. "No Socialist," declared a Memorandum prepared by Lithuanian exiles, "can be sure of his life in Lithuania to-day."

These terrorist activities have been intensified by the presence in the country of secret organisations of a Fascist flavour, the best known of which is the "Iron Wolf" society. These societies were responsible for a pogrom against the Jews carried out in Kovno, Slabada and Sanciai in August, 1929. The Lithuanian Government at first denied the existence of this attack, and even punished the reporter of a newspaper which recorded it, but the scandal becoming too well known to be concealed, Professor Voldemaras admitted the facts and promised to punish those responsible.

In January, 1930, came a change of Government, Herr Tubelis taking over control of the State from Professor Voldemaras. But martial law, the censorship and the arrests continued. At that date more than two hundred members of the Socialist Party were in prison, together with many supporters of other Opposition parties. The new Government legalised the Social-Democratic Party, but maintained the Terror against its known members, basing its actions upon the approved Fascist pattern which is now so fashionable with those European dictators who find violence more convenient than reasoned debate.

A year later, in February, 1931, further reprisals were being carried out against political opponents. In that month, Dr. Karwelis was arrested at Kovno and taken to the Warni concentration camp under a three months' sentence "under suspicion of being against the public order." And there were still over sixty Socialists in Lithuanian prisons. Requests for the registration of trade unions were still being refused, and while the Social-Democratic Party had secured permission to hold meetings of its members, it could do so only at Kovno, the capital, and in the presence of the police. Outside the capital permission to hold meetings was still being refused.

No foreign newspapers report these things. Lithuania is a small nation. What happens there is of no particular importance—except when viewed as a fragment of the grand repudiation of liberty in Europe during the past twelve years. But conditions in all three small nations mentioned in this chapter are important to the rest of Europe in one respect. They help to swell the flood of despotism which has submerged vast areas of Europe since the war. They

form an integral part of that challenge—the challenge which cannot be denied, which must be answered: “ Shall government of the people, for the people, by the people perish off the earth ? ”

In six nations it has already gone—vanished without trace, and tyranny challenges freedom in the broad light of day. In other nations still governed by democratic institutions, the same disaster threatens, and the fundamental liberties of man are no longer taken for granted.

How long will tyranny enthroned survive in the midst of Europe ? Is the tide of despotism rising or falling ? How many more martyrs must suffer torture and die in the prison-houses before we shall be able to look round Europe and declare that “ every citizen is an uncrowned king ? ”

Only history can answer. But those who understand the real nature of Europe's dictatorships to-day—whether Red or White—will prefer to study them from afar rather than to copy them. For whether the victims are aristocrats, *bourgeoisie* or proletarians—Communists, Socialists or reactionaries, the methods by which they are deprived of their elementary rights are the methods of the Dark Ages transplanted into the present day.

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